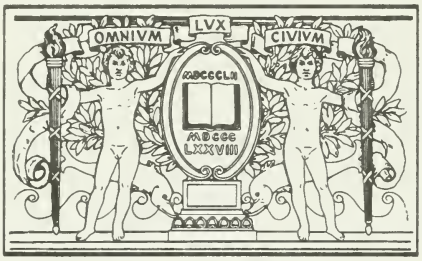
When Sarah Went To School

Elsie Singmaster



BOSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

WITHDRAWN
by the Trustees of the
WHITE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

WHEN SARAH WENT TO SCHOOL

(page 18)

IT IS NOT RIGHT FOR ME TO GO

WHEN SARAH WENT TO SCHOOL

9765 6

BY ELSIE SINGMASTER

AUTHOR OF "WHEN SARAH SAVED THE DAY"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

COPYRIGHT, 1910, BY ELSIE SINGMASTER.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO REPRODUCE
THIS BOOK OR PARTS THEREOF IN ANY FORM

Published October 1910

Jordan
PZ3
.S617Wh

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

TO THE MEMORY OF OUR
GRANDMOTHER
SARAH MATTERN SINGMASTER

"What did the other children do?
And what were childhood, wanting you?"

CONTENTS

I. The Dress Parade 1

II. "The Normal" 21

III. Sarah loses her Temper 44

IV. Sarah explains 65

V. Professor Minturn's Experiment . . . 81

VI. The "Christmas Carol" 99

VII. Sarah saves the Day Once More . . . 121

VIII. The Result of Professor Minturn's Experiment 139

IX. The State Board 158

X. The Chairman makes a Speech 173

ILLUSTRATIONS

"It is not right for me to go" (page 18) *Frontispiece*

On the Threshold stood Miss Ellingwood . . 64

She seems to have fainted 146

He kept her beside him 186

From drawings by Wilson C. Dexter.

WHEN SARAH WENT TO SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

THE DRESS PARADE

Across the angle of the post-and-rail fence at the lower corner of the Wenners' yard, a board had been laid, and behind the board stood a short, slender, bright-eyed young girl, her hands busy with an assortment of small articles spread out before her. There were a few glass beads, a string of buttons, half a dozen small, worn toys, a basket of early apples, and a plate of crullers. When they were arranged to her satisfaction, she took an apple in one hand and a cruller in the other, and, climbing the fence, perched on the upper rail and began to eat.

Before she had taken more than two bites an extraordinary procession appeared round

the corner of the house. Ellen Louisa, one of the Wenner twins, dressed in a long gingham dress of her sister-in-law's, leaned affectionately upon the arm of the other twin, Louisa Ellen, who wore with ludicrous effect a coat and hat of their brother William's. Clinging to Louisa Ellen's hand was a small fat boy. They solemnly approached the improvised store.

"Is any one at home in this store?" asked Louisa Ellen in a gruff voice.

The proprietress slid down from the top of the fence. She spoke carefully, but she did not quite succeed in disguising her Pennsylvania-German accent.

"Well, sir, what is it to-day?"

"I want —" It was Ellen Louisa, who spoke in a simpering tone — "I want a penny's worth of what you can get the most of for a penny, missis. I want it for my little boy. Apples will do. He has it sometimes in his stomach, and —"

A loud crash interrupted Ellen Louisa's

account of Albert's delicate constitution. He had seized the propitious moment for the purloining of two crullers, and in order to establish his ownership, had taken a large bite out of each. It was the storekeeper's quick grab which brought the counter to the ground, and mingled all the wares in wild confusion on the grass.

Albert looked frightened. When, instead of scolding, Sarah dropped to her knees and helped him gather up the toys, he stared at her, bewildered.

"You 'd catch it if I was n't going to the Normal to-morrow to be learned!" said Sarah. "But to-day is a special day. What shall we play next?"

The twins swiftly shed their superfluous garments, and became two thin little girls, who could scarcely be told apart. Their plaid gingham aprons waved in the breeze as they danced about.

"Let us play 'Uncle Daniel,'" they cried together.

Even sixteen-year-old Sarah hopped up and down at the brilliancy of the suggestion. Uncle Daniel Swartz was their mother's brother, who lived on the next farm. After their mother and father had died, and their older brother had apparently disappeared into the frozen North, whither he had gone to seek his fortune, Uncle Daniel, who had long coveted the fine farm, had attempted to divide the little family and add the fertile acres to his own. It was Sarah who had stubbornly opposed him, holding bravely out until William had come home. William had married pretty Miss Miflin, the district-school teacher, and, giving up his plans for further adventure, had settled down to become a truck farmer. Already he was succeeding beyond his rosiest hopes.

Both he and his wife were anxious that Sarah should go to school, and all the summer Laura had been helping her to recall the small knowledge she had had before heavy care and responsibility had taken her

from the district school. To-morrow she was to enter the sub-Junior class of the Normal School, which William and Laura had attended. Laura had corresponded with the principal, Doctor Ellis, and had engaged Sarah's room. It had been a busy summer. Sarah had kept up her Geography after she had left school, but in other branches she had needed a good deal of tutoring.

No one who saw her now, in her wild game with the twins, would have guessed that she had ever had any care or responsibility. She assumed first the character of Uncle Daniel; she told the twins that they must go to live with Aunt Mena, she tried to entice Albert away. Then she was Uncle Daniel's hired man, Jacob Kalb, who had translated his name to Calf, because he was anxious to be thought English. In this rôle she was pursued round the barn by the twins, who brandished an old, disabled gun, which in Sarah's hands had once terrified Jacob Kalb.

Once, in this delightful game, they passed close to the fence beyond which Jacob himself was working. Sarah balanced for a second on the upper rail.

"Jacob Calf,
You make me laugh!"

she shrieked, and then jumped down backward. The twins held the gun aloft, screaming with delight.

The game closed with a scene in the Orphans' Court, where Uncle Daniel demanded that he be made their guardian, and where William returned at exactly the proper and dramatic moment.

"And now," announced Sarah breathlessly, when it was all over, "I am going to say good-by to everything."

A feeling of solemnity fell suddenly upon the twins and Albert. Who would be storekeeper on the morrow? Who would be Uncle Daniel and Jacob Kalb and the judge of the Orphans' Court in swift succession?

Who would help them with their lessons? Who would defend them if Uncle Daniel should ever come threatening again? Who would draw bears and tigers and "nelephunts" and all manner of birds and beasts? "May we go fishing?" they would ask Sister Laura, and Sister Laura would answer, "Yes, if Sarah will go with you." "May we write with ink?" — "Yes, if Sarah will spread some newspapers on the table, and sit beside you with her book." Would these treats be forbidden them? Or would they be allowed to do as they chose? But even independence would be distasteful without Sarah. Each twin seized her by the hand.

"It is a long time till Christmas," mourned Louisa Ellen.

"*Ach*, stay by us!" wailed Ellen Louisa.

"And grow up to be like Jacob Calf!" cried Sarah derisively. "I guess not! I am going to be a teacher, and if you ever get in my school, then look out! You will then find out once if you don't study. I will then

learn you Latin and Greek and Algebray and more things than you ever heard of in the world, Ellen Louisa and Louisa Ellen. You would like to grow up like the fishes in the crick. Good-by, crick!" Sarah drew her hands away from the twins, and dabbled them in the cool, fresh water. "Good-by, fishes! Good-by, bridge! Good-by, bushes! Why, Ellen Louisa! Louisa Ellen!" Sarah looked at them with an expression of comical surprise. Louisa Ellen and Ellen Louisa were crying. "Stop it this minute!" She seized Albert by the hand. Albert had already opened his mouth, preparatory to joining his sisters in a wail. "Albert and I will beat you to the barn.

"One for the money,
Two for the show,
Three to make ready,
And four to go!"

Louisa Ellen and Ellen Louisa did not stop to dry their tears, but scampered over the ground like young colts, their skirts flying.

When Albert and Sarah got to the door, the twins had vanished, and there ensued a game of hide and seek such as the old barn had never smiled upon. Sarah climbed about like a monkey. She seemed to be in half a dozen places at once. The twins thought she was downstairs in one of the mangers, when suddenly her voice was heard from the top of the haymow. They played tag on the barn-floor, they sang, they danced, with Sarah always in the lead. It was certain that the stately Normal School would open its doors on the morrow to no such hoyden as this.

They were in the midst of

> "Barnum had a nelephunt,
> Chumbo was his name, sir,"

when the barn-door opened, and a young woman appeared. She watched them for a moment silently.

"Well, young Indians," she said.

The oldest of the young Indians clasped her hands in distress.

"Is it time to get supper already?"

"Not quite. And if four members of the family did n't insist upon having waffles, you should n't help at all. Your clothes are all ready, and I want you to come and see them."

The twins raced wildly toward the house, and Sarah followed more slowly with her sister-in-law and Albert. She looked shyly and gratefully at Laura. She had not yet grown quite accustomed to having "Teacher" a member of the family. She had so long looked up to her with awe and admiration that her constant presence in the house did not seem quite real. Laura often laughed at her.

"I should think, Sarah, that after you had cleared up my outrageous bread-dough three times, and had taken my burnt pies from the oven, you would begin to feel fairly well acquainted with me."

Sarah flushed with embarrassment. It was true that Laura was slow about learning to cook. But cooking was such an ordinary,

every-day accomplishment! It was much more remarkable never to have had to cook.

"But now you can make good bread and pies," she would insist.

The whole summer had seemed like a dream. The house was no longer strange and dark and lonely as it had been after their father had died. Sarah no longer crept fearfully about at night, fastening the shutters before dark, for fear that Uncle Daniel would try to get in. It had been a happy, happy summer. William came and went, whistling, teasing the twins, riding fat Albert round on his shoulder. Uncle Daniel annoyed them no more. "Teacher" bent with flushed face over the stove, laughing at her mistakes, and calling occasionally to Sarah for help; and Sarah herself sat by the window, a little table before her, on which were books and paper and pencils.

The little table was gone from the window now, the lessons with Laura were over, tomorrow night Sarah would sleep away from

home for the first time in her life. They had expected that the trolley company, which had given them a good price for the right of way through the farm, would have finished its line, and that Sarah would have been able to go back and forth to school each week. But the tracks had just begun to creep out from the county-seat.

The twins had run upstairs; their deep *ohs!* and *achs!* could be heard in the kitchen below. They shrieked for Sarah, who was already on the steps.

When she looked round the familiar room, she clasped her hands and then stood perfectly still. Beside her bed was an open trunk, and spread out on the bed itself and on the twins' trundle-bed was her outfit for school. There were two school dresses, and a better dress and a best dress, — the last of red cashmere, with bands of silk. There were new shoes and a new coat and two hats and gloves and an umbrella and handkerchiefs and underwear, all marked with her name, and a

gymnasium suit, and a scarlet kimono and a comfort and pencils and tablets and — Sarah began suddenly to tremble — a little silver watch and chain and a fountain-pen.

"The little watch was my first one, Sarah," explained her sister-in-law. "It keeps good time. And the fountain-pen is from William, and the umbrella —"

"And the umberella" — the twins and Albert had seized upon it simultaneously — "the umberella is from us. William, he sold our Spotty Calf for us, and this is some of the money, and you can make it up and put it down, and it has a cover like a snake, and — Look at it, once!"

Sarah took the umbrella in her hand. Her school dresses had been tried on by Laura, who had made them; she had known all about those. And William and Laura had made a trip to town and had been very short and mysterious about the bundles they brought home. She had supposed they had brought a few things for her, — a new pair of shoes,

perhaps, or a new shawl. But *these* things! Once, during her mother's lifetime, she had had a red woolen dress; she still cherished a patch which remained after it had been made over for one of the twins. Except for that, her dresses had always been of gingham or calico. And two hats, when last year she had had only a sun-bonnet! And a fountain-pen, like Laura's, and Laura's own silver watch! A lump came into Sarah's throat.

Perhaps Laura felt a lump in her own.

"Come," she said brightly but a little huskily. "You must try these things on, and you must hurry if you are going to bake waffles for this hungry brood." With one hand she took the umbrella from Sarah, with the other she unbuttoned her gingham dress. "Children, shut down the trunk-lid and sit on it. Now, Sarah, the gymnasium suit first."

Sarah chuckled hysterically as she was helped into the flannel blouse and bloomers.

"She looks like a bear," giggled Louisa Ellen.

"Like a pretty thin bear," said Sister Laura. "She will have to be fatter when she comes home. Louisa Ellen, run and get my work-basket. These elastics must be tightened. Now, Sarah, the school dresses, then the blue sailor suit and the blue hat. You are to wear those to-morrow."

Sarah stared down at her dress, still speechless with amazement and delight.

"And now the red dress. Your brother William chose this color, Sarah, and your hat and coat match it."

Fat and silent Albert opened his mouth to speak.

"She looks like —" he began, but could think of nothing to which to compare her. "She don't look like nothing."

"She looks like a — a fine lady," said Louisa Ellen. "*Ach*, when can *we* go to the Normal?"

Laura had turned down the glass in the old-fashioned bureau.

"Now, Sarah, take a good look, and then

undress. These sleeves must be shortened a little. I can do that this evening. I'll pack the trunk while you get supper."

Sarah revolved obediently before the glass. But her eyes saw nothing. The lump in her throat seemed now to suffocate her; she struggled frantically to swallow it, but it only grew larger. The twins watched her in fright. Presently Louisa Ellen slid down from the trunk, and went across the room and touched Laura on the arm.

"Something is after Sarah," she whispered in shocked surprise. Never before had Sarah behaved like this.

Laura laid down her work.

"Why, Sarah, dear! What is the matter?"

It was a moment before Sarah could speak. She rubbed her eyes, then she looked down at the new red dress, and the new red coat, and then at the old gingham dress and apron on the floor, and at her hands, on which still lingered the marks of heavy toil.

"I would rather stay at home," she faltered.

"Ellen Louisa and Louisa Ellen can have my things, and — and when they are big, they can go in — in the Normal. I — I would rather stay at home and do the work."

Laura sat down again in her chair by the window, and drew Sarah to her knee.

"Why would you rather stay at home, Sarah?" she asked gently. It was not strange that a reaction had come. There had been the struggle with Uncle Daniel, and then the long, hot months of summer, and now the immediate excitement of the afternoon. "Tell me, Sarah."

"I am too dumb," wailed Sarah. "Nobody can't teach me nothing."

"I thought I had taught you a good deal this summer."

"But there won't be any teachers like you at the Normal. I would rather stay at home. I am too old to go any more in the school. I am little but I am old."

"Like Runty," cried Louisa Ellen. The twins had been listening in frightened and

fascinated attention. Runty was a pig which had never grown. "Runty is little, but he is old."

Even Sarah had to smile at this.

"But you will have too much work to do," she said to Laura. "It is not right for me to go."

Laura laughed.

"Cast no aspersions upon my ability to keep this house, young lady," she cried gayly. "And you will be no older than many of the girls and boys in your class. Now take off your dress and go mix your batter, and in ten minutes I'll be there, and then William will come home, and then we 'll have supper, and then you must go to bed early."

When William came, there was no trace of Sarah's tears. He teased her gayly, as William always did, and said, as he helped himself to a fifth waffle, that the first four samples were pretty good, and that now he was really beginning to eat. It was not until she was safely in bed that the lump came back

into her throat. This going away to school seemed suddenly worse than the long struggle against Uncle Daniel. She was going to live among strangers, — she would hear no more dear, familiar Pennsylvania-German, she would see only strange, critical faces. The Normal students would probably laugh at her, as she laughed at Jacob Kalb. They might make rhymes about her, as she made rhymes about Jacob.

Laura, who tiptoed into the room to put the red coat with its shortened sleeves into her trunk, heard her whisper.

"What did you say, Sarah?" she asked.

Sarah hid her face in her pillow in an agony of embarrassment. She could not possibly tell Laura what she was saying to herself, and Laura, thinking that she was talking in her sleep, tiptoed out again to complete her preparations for the next day's journey.

Before Sarah went to sleep, she smothered an hysterical giggle. One possible rhyme

which might occur to the Normalites had come into her mind. It was that which she had been saying to herself. It was ominous, but she could not help laughing. It ran,—

"Sarah 's Dutch,
She is not much."

CHAPTER II

"THE NORMAL"

In the morning Sarah found, fortunately, no time for regret or grief. She had said good-by to the twins and Albert the night before, and though they had loudly insisted that they would be up in time to see her off, they did not wake and were not called. The three older members of the household had breakfast together, then the new trunk was lifted to the back of the spring-wagon, and Sarah, in her new sailor suit and blue hat, climbed to her place between William and Laura for the drive to the station.

Her heart beat so rapidly that she could not speak. She looked back at the broad, low-lying house, shadowed by a great hickory tree; at the friendly barn, which had been a playground for them all; and then at the winding, twisting stream, which made their

land so fertile. Was it possible that a few days ago she had wished to go away?

Up at Uncle Daniel's house, the family was already astir. Jacob Kalb crossed the barn-yard, milk-pail in hand, disdaining to look back, though he must have heard plainly the sound of the spring-wagon.

"He will go in and peek out," laughed Sarah. "Jacob, he would n't miss nothing."

"'Jacob would n't miss anything' is what you mean, is n't it, Sarah?" asked her sister-in-law.

"*Ach*, yes!" cried Sarah penitently. "But what is coming?"

She grew pale. Down from the Swartz house hurried Aunt 'Liza. "She can't stop me!" said Sarah, gasping.

William laughed. "No, indeed."

Aunt 'Liza came to the side of the wagon. She had never approved of Uncle Daniel's methods.

"Here is something for Sarah," she said. "I thought while she was going off I would

make her a little cake, once, and a little apple *schnitz*. She liked always apple *schnitz*."

Sarah jumped down over the wheel of the spring-wagon.

"*Ach*, I thank myself."

And she seized the stout lady in a fervent hug, which her aunt as fervently returned.

"And now," said Sarah happily, as she climbed back, "I am not cross over nobody, and nobody is cross over me. *Ach*, I know I am talking dumb again! But after I get on the cars, I will say everything right."

She could scarcely sit still. Laura and William looked at each other and smiled.

In all her life Sarah had been on the train but once. That was six months ago, when, accompanied by the twins and "Teacher," she had gone to the county-seat to protest against Uncle Daniel's being made their guardian. She was too much worried then to enjoy the roar of the great engine as it rushed upon them, the hurry with which

they scrambled aboard, the wild thrill of delight as the train got under way. Now she enjoyed each sensation to the full. There had never been such a wonderful train as this, whose seats were so luxuriously cushioned, which moved so swiftly, which was so filled with interesting persons. Sarah waved her hand to William, she tried to call to him a final message to the twins, and then they were off. Sarah drew a deep breath.

"*Ach!*" she wailed. "My trunk!"

Laura showed her the check. "Your trunk is on the train, my dear."

"*Ach*, it is too wonderful!" cried Sarah. "No, I won't say *ach* any more. *Ach*, but I am going to try!" She clapped her hand over her mouth and looked up comically. "*Ach* — I can't express me without *ach*."

"Yes, you can," Laura assured her. "See the girls opposite us. They're probably going to the Normal School."

Sarah looked eagerly across the aisle. The girls were laughing and talking together as

though they had not seen each other for a long time. They were tall and slender, and they were unlike any girls that Sarah's admiring eyes had ever seen. One had blonde curly hair, the other was dark, with wide, lovely eyes.

"Do you think I will know those girls?" she whispered.

"Of course you will. Those and many more."

Sarah clasped her hands happily. The stern and critical race with which she had peopled the Normal School suddenly ceased to exist, and lovely creatures like these took its place. Sarah's eyes brightened as she smoothed down her new blue dress. Then she sighed. The bothersome consciousness of her own unworthiness overwhelmed her.

"The Normal will have a hard time to make me look like them," she said to herself.

Once, long ago, when her mother and father were still alive, and the twins scarcely more than babies, the Wenners had taken a

long holiday drive. One of the towns which they visited was that in which the Normal School was situated. It was then that her father promised that if Sarah studied, she should go there. She could see the school as plainly as though it were yesterday instead of eight weary years ago; she could hear her father's voice. Her recollection of the low house and the barn and the creek which they had left that morning was not more vivid. Before the train stopped, she saw the tall tower, which she remembered; she knew just how it overshadowed the other buildings. And there had been beautiful trees and tennis-courts and young people going back and forth.

She scrambled down from the train, and clung close to Laura, a little frightened by the noise and confusion about her, the loud greetings, the shouts of hackmen.

"This way to the Normal School. Take my carriage, lady!"

They picked their way round a great pile

of trunks, and Laura gave Sarah's check to a baggage man. He touched his hat smilingly.

"Glad to see you back, Miss."

"Does he know you?" asked Sarah in awe.

Laura smiled. A pink glow had come into her cheeks.

"No. He only recognizes me for an old student. We 'll walk down to school. It is n't far, and we 'll both enjoy it."

A little farther down the street a grocer stood at the door of his shop, and to him Laura said good-morning.

"Does *he* know you?" asked Sarah.

"He remembers that I used to buy apples from him. That is the place to get the best apples in town. You see, coming back to school is like coming back home."

"I never thought of that," said Sarah slowly. She was to remember it clearly enough months afterward. "But—"

They had turned a corner and come out before a wide green campus. "But this ain't

—*ach!* is n't *my* Normal! It—it was n't so big, and this—this is n't *my* tower!"

"No, the tower you saw is the little one over yonder. This is the new Recitation Building. This was n't here then. See, over there on the Main Building is your tower. And this is the Model School, and yonder is the Infirmary, and away back there is the Athletic Field, and— Ah, here we are!" And Laura ran up the steps of the Main Building as though she were coming to school herself.

The wide door stood open, there was a sound of cheerful talking from within. Sarah heard a man's voice lifted suddenly above the rest.

"Why, Mrs. Wenner, how do you do? And this is your sister-in-law. We are glad to see you both."

"Thank you," answered Laura. "Sarah, this is Dr. Ellis. I think you said Sarah was to have my old room."

"Yes," answered the principal. "Eugene

will take you up and give you the keys. Here, Eugene."

In another minute they were in the elevator; then they went down a wide hall and turned a corner.

"Here we are. I wonder whether your room-mates are here."

It was the bell-boy who answered as he flung the door open.

"It looks so, miss."

The two newcomers stood in the doorway and gasped. Sarah was not entirely unacquainted with confusion. She knew what the kitchen at home looked like at the end of a morning's baking at which the twins and Albert had been allowed to assist. But the twins and Albert at their worst could accomplish nothing to equal this.

A room in which two trunks are being unpacked is not expected to look very neat, but this confusion seemed the result of careful effort. There were dresses scattered here and there, not on the backs of chairs, or

laid across the beds, but dropped to the floor and in heaps on the table. There were shoes, not set side by side, but widely scattered, a slipper and an overshoe on the bureau, a boot and a slipper on the radiator. A drawer had been taken from the bureau and laid on a bed; into it a trunk-tray had been emptied, helter skelter, as though its contents were waste paper. Apparently the owner had been suddenly called away, for the tray still lay upside down across the drawer.

To Sarah's Pennsylvania-German eyes, the scene was terrible.

"You 'll have to do some missionary work, Sarah," Laura said merrily. "This closet seems to be empty. Hang your hat here, and take that bureau. We'll turn it this way so that the light is a little better. That is the way Helen Ellingwood used to have it when she and I roomed here together. The school was n't so crowded and there were only two of us. Now we'll take your pitcher down the hall and fill it, and by that time your trunk

may come, and perhaps the owners of these clothes, also, and then we can clear up."

They made their way round the trunks and boxes in the hall. A few doors away, a girl who was bending over her trunk stood up to let them pass. She turned her face away, but not before they had seen that it was streaked with black. Her hands, too, were as black as ink, and she was crying. Laura stopped at once.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"I packed — a — bottle of ink — in my trunk, and it — it has broken. I — "

Laura looked into the depths of the trunk.

"Oh, my child! Have you taken the bottle out?"

"Yes, but the ink is there yet."

Laura pushed back her cuffs.

"Can you get me a lot of newspapers and spread them thickly on your floor? There, in the sunshine. Why, these things seem black to begin with. Your gymnasium suit is black, isn't it? And here is a black skirt.

See, it has n't reached down to your books, and the trunk is n't stained."

"But my white petticoats are — are all black." The girl's tears made white channels on her face.

Laura patted her on the shoulder. "Then wash your face and hands, and run down to the book-room and get some ink eradicator, and I'll show you how to apply it. Come, Sarah."

Sarah's bright eyes shone. Laura might not know how to make waffles, but she knew other, more wonderful things. Sarah's heart swelled; she thought of Albert and the twins in this safe care, and she slipped her hand into Laura's without a word, and Laura smiled down at her.

As they came back through the hall, they heard a cheerful voice.

"I'll unlock the door, Eugene. Yes, we 're glad to be back. Move that trunk in here, please. Gertrude, you brought a trunk-cover, did n't you?"

A dark-eyed girl appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, Ethel."

"They are our girls," whispered Sarah.

"Yes, and they are evidently other people's girls."

The hall was suddenly crowded with a welcoming throng.

By this time, Sarah's room-mates had appeared. One was tall and stout; she said that her name was Ellen Ritter. The other, who was equally stout but much shorter, said that she was Mabel Thorn. It was to her that the bureau-drawer belonged. She lifted the trunk-tray and slid the drawer into place.

"Our trunks must be out of here by night," she said. "They take them to the trunk-room. Mine's ready."

"And mine," said Ellen Ritter.

She slammed down the lid, and pulled the trunk into the hall, and Mabel pushed hers after it. Two small, cleared spaces were left, otherwise there was no change in the appearance of the room. The girls did not return,

even to close the door. Sarah, staring at them, saw a smiling young woman poise for an instant on the sill, a hand on either jamb.

"Well, Laura Miflin!" she said.

The speed with which Sarah had flown to meet William upon his return from Alaska was no greater than that with which Laura crossed the room.

"Helen Ellingwood!" she cried. "What are you doing here?"

"I am going to teach Elocution. Why have n't you written to me? I did n't even know you were married. I live next door. And who is this, and how *are* you?" And Miss Ellingwood pushed aside a pile of books and underclothes and collars and sat down on the edge of the bed. "These things don't belong 'to you nor none of your family,' I hope?"

Laura shook her head.

"This is my sister-in-law, Sarah Wenner, question number one. I am very well and very happy, question number two. No, these

do *not* belong ' to me nor none of my family,' question number three. What would you do with them?"

"Spank the owners. Perhaps they 'll clear up, though. The first day is always demoralizing. Now tell me everything you can think of."

And Miss Ellingwood shifted to a more comfortable position, and while Laura unpacked and Sarah put away, the old friends chattered until dinner-time.

The great dining-room, with all the confusion of the first day of school, was an awesome place to country-bred Sarah. She was sure that she should never know one face from another. She should never learn to find her place.

"You must sit at my table," said Miss Ellingwood. "There will be plenty of room there to-day, and this afternoon I shall have you assigned there permanently. This way"; and Miss Ellingwood put out a guiding hand. Sarah began to take courage.

The afternoon seemed as long as the morning had been short. Directly after dinner, Sarah went with Laura to the train. She did not see the rushing engine so clearly now, nor watch the streaming white smoke; her eyes, fixed firmly upon a slender figure in a brown suit, were dimmed, and the strange lump of yesterday had come back into her throat. Now, at last, the moment of separation had come.

She walked slowly back to school, and about the grounds. Laura would be getting home now, and William would have driven to the station to meet her. Had the twins done just as they were told all day? Had they remembered the deserted kittens in the barn? Would Laura be able to fix the fire for the night?

Sarah ate her supper with difficulty. Miss Ellingwood did not appear, the other students said little, Sarah could not see her room-mates, or the Ethel and Gertrude who seemed a little less strange than the other

students, or the girl who had packed the ink in her trunk. At the recollection of her woe-begone face, Sarah smiled and felt better.

"She is dumber yet than I," she said to herself.

At seven o'clock there was a chapel service. The gongs rang in the halls, and there was a general opening of doors, and passing of footsteps. Sarah followed her neighbors down the hall. At the entrance to the chapel stood Miss Ellingwood, a book in her hand. She was assigning seats which the students were to keep for the year.

"Wenner, Row B, left, seat 32. Down there to the left, Sarah, near the girl in the white dress."

Sarah made her way down the sloping aisle. She had never been in any room larger than the little country church, and this chapel with its high ceiling, its fine chandeliers, seemed marvelous. In the chandeliers, strange to say, candles were burning instead of lamps.

To her dismay, her seat was directly beneath one of them. She glanced upward uneasily. There was no contrivance to catch the drippings, and everybody must know that candles dripped. She looked down at her new blue dress; it would be impossible to get candle grease out of it. She meant to speak to the girl in the white dress; then she saw that Mabel Thorn was coming down the aisle. She took the next seat.

"Are you not afraid of the candles?" whispered Sarah.

"What candles?"

"Those, up there. They will drip on us."

Mabel tilted her head and looked up. Then she grinned.

"Did you never hear of gas?" she asked.

"Stove gas," answered Sarah. "Our stove makes it when the wind is not right."

"You never heard of illuminating gas?"

Sarah shook her head. "Never."

"Where do you come from?"

"Near Spring Grove post-office."

"Well, the candles won't hurt you," laughed Mabel.

She got up and went across to the next row of seats to where the girl in white was sitting, and whispered to her, and they both turned and looked at Sarah. Then she came back to her place, as the chapel began to fill, and whispered to the girl on the other side, and she looked at Sarah and laughed. Sarah became slowly aware that she had said something very foolish.

Mabel did not wait for her when chapel was over, nor did she and Ellen appear until bed-time. Sarah had sat for a long time staring across the moonlit campus, and waiting to ask which bed she should take. There were a double and a single bed side by side. She supposed that the two friends would wish to sleep together, but she did not know. Once she heard the doleful strains of "Home, Sweet Home," played on a mouth organ, and some one called, "Have mercy on the new students!" and there was a burst of laughter.

When Mabel and Ellen finally arrived, they told her that she was to have the single bed. She supposed that now they would put the room in order. Well, she would cover her head from the light, and be thankful. But they undressed and tumbled into bed, even before Sarah was ready, without touching anything except the articles which were in their way. In a suspiciously short time, they were asleep.

Sarah lifted the clothes from the single bed and laid them on the chairs, then she attempted to blow out the light. Mabel was wide awake in an instant.

"Turn it off there at the wall, you goose!" she said; and was at once apparently asleep.

Sarah made her way warily toward her bed. Having said her prayers, she laid back the covers and jumped in.

Instantly there was a terrific crash, and she went down with spring and mattress to the floor. She was for the first second too terrified to breathe, then she picked herself

up and found that she was not hurt. There was a faint light coming in through the transom, and she could see that the slats which supported the springs had become misplaced. With a little help, she could readjust them.

"*Ach*, would you please help me a little?" she begged.

There was no response from the double bed. Instead there came a heavy knock at the door.

"Who is out?" asked Sarah faintly. If the principal himself had replied, she would not have been surprised.

A stern "Let me in!" answered her. She drew her dress on over her nightgown and went to the door. A strange figure stood without, — a tall woman in a long, flowered dressing-gown.

"What was that noise?"

Sarah pointed to the bed. "I — I did n't know it would go — go down."

"Where are your room-mates?"

Mabel and Ellen evidently thought it was time to manifest signs of life.

"Here, Miss Jones."

"Can you explain this?"

"Oh, no, we were asleep. Were n't we, Sarah?"

"It just went down," stammered Sarah. "I — I guess I jumped too hard on it."

"What is your name?"

It was the first time the Wenner name had ever been mentioned with hesitation and shame.

"Sarah Wenner."

The tall figure was gone, its silent departure worse than threats, and Sarah closed the door. Mabel turned over lazily.

"Get up and help her fix the bed, Ellen, I saved her from blowing out the light."

Ellen rose, grumbling. Miss Jones lived beneath them and was the strictest teacher in the school, she said. Sarah would be haled to the office to-morrow. She helped to put the slats in place, and told Sarah not to

make any more noise. Then, long after exhausted and terrified Sarah had fallen asleep, she giggled with Mabel until the night-watchman rapped at the door. That, mercifully, Sarah did not hear.

CHAPTER III

SARAH LOSES HER TEMPER

When Sarah opened her eyes, early the next morning, it was scarcely more than light. She was accustomed to spring out of bed before she was fully awake; there had been very little time in her life for the last, delicious nap of early morning. There was always the stock to be fed, the cows to be milked, and the milk to be taken to the creamery, and afterwards the twins to be roused and fed and sent to school. Since Laura's advent, life had been vastly easier, but the feeling of responsibility had not altogether vanished from Sarah's mind.

There was something about the happenings of the night before that sent her hurrying out of bed as she hurried when the fear of Uncle Daniel hung over her, when she used to get up before daybreak to assure her-

self that the twins and Albert and the farm property were all safely in place.

She could not at first make out where she was; then the prodigious chaos of the room recalled yesterday's experiences. And here was her own bed, pushed out a little from the wall, its covers all awry. She remembered now distinctly what had happened last night.

Ellen and Mabel slept peacefully in their double bed; and as she remembered her sudden downfall and their lack of sympathy, her face flushed. Snatches of their whispered talk, heard in drowsiness, came back to her, and she began slowly to guess that it was neither the carelessness of the school bed-makers nor her own light weight which had sent the spring and mattress tumbling to the floor. She felt a pang of fright as she remembered the stern teacher in the flowered gown. But surely, they would not punish her for an accident! Presently a faint smile lifted the corners of her mouth. There was no doubt that it had been funny. But the

girls might have waited until she was a little more at home.

When she was dressed she sat down by the window. There was not a soul to be seen on the quiet campus, and not a sound to be heard. It was almost six o'clock, and she began to be hungry. She had forgotten to ask the breakfast hour.

After a while there were faint noises, the opening of a distant door, the sound of sweeping down on the walks, and then the ringing of a great hand-bell. Sarah heard it first in a far corner of the building, then it drew nearer and nearer, and she heard the swift steps of Eugene, who carried it. As it went past the door, she put her hands over her ears. She smiled again, thinking that a bell like that might wake even Albert and the twins.

She began to be a little alarmed when she saw that neither Ellen nor Mabel stirred. She thought that Mabel's eyes opened, but they closed again at once. Had the girls

grown suddenly deaf, or were they ill? Sarah tiptoed toward the bed and stared at them. Both were breathing regularly. But it was time to get up, and they would not wish to be late for breakfast. Sarah laid her hand on Ellen's shoulder.

"Stand up. It belled. *Ach!*" No, thank fortune, they had not heard. Sarah took a deep breath and amended her speech. "The bell rang," she called. "It is time to get up."

Still Ellen did not respond, and she went to the other side of the bed and tried to rouse Mabel.

"It is time to get up!"

A sleepy and cross "What?" answered her.

"The bell rang. It is time to get up."

Mabel turned over on her other side.

"Let me be."

Once more Sarah sat down by the window. Why did these girls not wish to get up? Did n't they wish any breakfast? Did n't

one have to get up? Perhaps they were like the twins, who were cross at first but grateful afterwards. She touched Ellen once more.

"It is time to get up."

Ellen sat up in bed.

"If you don't be quiet and stop bothering me I'll settle you. You need n't tell me when it's time to get up. I've been in this school for a year." With that she lay down again.

Once more Sarah sat down by the window. The great building was astir now. She heard doors open and shut, she heard girl call to girl, she heard Miss Ellingwood moving round in her bedroom, and still her roommates slept. Then an electric bell rang, and motion and sound increased. Sarah started toward the door. She would inquire whether that was the signal for breakfast, and she would go down. But a sharp voice stopped her.

Ellen and Mabel had sprung out of bed as though tossed by springs.

"Sarah," commanded Mabel, "run down the hall and fill this pitcher."

A look of distress came into Sarah's black eyes.

"I am afraid I will be late."

"Nonsense! Hurry."

Sarah flew down the hall. She met a score of girls going toward the elevator, and they looked at her smilingly.

"You 'd better hurry, youngster."

"*Ach,* I am!" answered Sarah.

To her amazement Ellen and Mabel were almost dressed when she returned. She would have set the pitcher down inside the door and then run, but Mabel called again.

"Wait a minute. You 're too late now to get in without permission, and you don't know where to go for that. See whether you can find a blue belt in that pile."

Sarah's tears dropped upon the pile of collars and ties and belts.

"I would rather not go than be late," she said.

The girls laughed. Mabel took the belt from her hand and hung it over her arm, meaning to buckle it as she ran.

"All right, you little goose," she said; and then the door closed behind them with a slam.

Sarah was desperately frightened. Perhaps they called a roll and the absentees were punished. There was no one in sight in the hall from whom she could ask advice, and she began wearily to make her bed.

"Perhaps I will have to pack my trunk, too," she said to herself. "But if I do not know what to do and nobody will tell me, how shall I find out?"

She felt a thrill of both terror and relief when she heard a footstep in the hall. It came directly to the door, there was a rap, then the door was pushed open.

"Why, Sarah, don't you want any breakfast?"

Sarah made a brave effort to steady her voice.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then why don't you come down?"

"I — I was too late," stammered Sarah.

"Well, come now, and to-morrow morning you will begin a little earlier." Miss Ellingwood held out a kindly hand. "Won't you?"

Sarah stammered another "Yes, ma'am." She could not say that she had been up since five o'clock, because that would involve explanation, and she did not wish to be a tale-bearer.

She caught Ellen Ritter's eye as they went down between the long lines of tables, and Ellen grinned and nudged Mabel. But Sarah did not care. Some one was interested in her. Miss Ellingwood had left her breakfast and had come all the way upstairs to find her. She ate her breakfast cheerfully, answering shyly the remarks of her companions.

"Now, when the next bell rings, you must go to the chapel," said Miss Ellingwood.

"Take a tablet and pencil with you, and then you can write down your classes for the day. And if you get into any difficulty, come to me. The bell will ring at eight o'clock, and you know where the chapel is."

At half-past seven Sarah took her tablet and two neatly sharpened lead pencils, and stole out of her room. Nobody should prevent her from being on time now. She went down quietly and opened the chapel door. Then she realized that she had forgotten the number of her seat. If she had such difficulty with little things, what would she do when lessons began?

Suddenly she remembered with a throb of relief the chandelier whose dripping she had feared. She sat down in a chair which was, as nearly as she could guess, the one she had occupied the night before, and bent her head back to look up. Yes, it was from this spot that she had seen the dangerous candles. She sighed thankfully, and proceeded to write her name on her note-books, and then

to read the school catalogue, which gave a list of her lessons.

There would be Physiology, Arithmetic, Spelling, and Political Geography, to begin with. In each of these she would have three recitations a week, and she must pass an examination in them before the State Board at the end of the year in order to enter the Junior class. Besides, she would have less frequent lessons in Latin, History, and Grammar. In these branches she would not have to be examined, except by her teachers, until the end of her Junior year. Each week she would also have an hour's exercise in drawing and in vocal music. And every other day she would have to spend three quarters of an hour in the gymnasium. Sarah shook her head solemnly. It seemed like a large contract for so small a girl.

All the morning she went to classes, gaining in each room a new book, a new note on her tablet, and a redder flush on her cheeks. By noon the pile of books had

grown almost to her chin. She carried them proudly across the campus and up to her room.

It was going to be hard, but not as hard as she had feared. She had naturally a quick mind, far quicker than she suspected. There were two branches in which she had a valuable advantage. Political Geography would be only a review. Her father had been a dreamer, loving accounts of strange cities and far countries, and in the long evenings after he had become ill, he and Sarah had pored over the atlas, following William on his long journey, and trying to picture the strange countries on the other side of the world. There were few countries which Sarah could not bound, few rivers and cities which she could not locate.

Nor would Spelling be hard. The Wenners were naturally good spellers; even little Albert could spell simple words like "cat" and "dog."

But there were Physiology and Arithmetic

and History. The History had already given her a bad fright.

Professor Minturn, opening the course with a lecture on the interest and value of historical study, had suddenly looked about the class to find some one to read a paragraph from the text-book illustrating what he was saying. Sarah's face, bent eagerly forward, attracted him, and he asked her her name and told her to read. The color flamed into her cheeks, and with trembling hands she found her place in the book, and then rose. Instead of standing still, she walked to the front of the room, and, in a fashion learned before Laura had come to teach the Spring Grove School, "toed" carefully a crack in the floor, lifted her book to a level with her chin, and began.

"Page three, chapter one, paragraph four. 'The Study of History.'"

Wild laughter interrupted her, at which Professor Minturn frowned and sternly commanded silence. He was a nervous, easily

irritated man, who never felt that his students worked hard enough.

"Go on, Miss Wenner."

Sarah read through the paragraph with a voice which she strenuously endeavored to make steady. It seemed to her that she had never seen so many *th*'s and *v*'s, which she was just learning to pronounce. But she got safely to the end, and then fled to her seat.

"I have never heard a paragraph read more intelligently," commented Professor Minturn grimly, thereby adding to her confusion.

Of all her lessons, Latin promised to be the most terrible.

"I will not talk to the twins again about learning them Latin," she said to herself, with a sigh. "But the teacher, he seems like a kind man. Perhaps he will help me sometimes a little."

In her room that afternoon, she handled the books as though they were loved dolls. Sarah had never really owned a book. The

school-books from which she had studied had belonged to William, and now were used by the twins. If anything remained of them after the twins were through with them, they would go to Albert. But these were hers, they were new, she might write her own name in them, she might keep them all her life.

The confusion in her room worried her, but she turned her back upon it, and set resolutely to work. By the time that Ellen and Mabel came in to prepare for gymnasium she had learned her History lesson and discovered that she need not study her Spelling.

The period of gymnasium proved to be another surprise. To a girl who climbed to the upper rung of the barn ladder and the top of a tall hickory tree, and who could churn butter and drive a fractious horse, the simple exercises with wands and dumb-bells were child's play. She wished to get back to her work, she wished to touch again the clean, white books.

Ellen and Mabel laughed at her unmercifully. They had been in the Normal School for a year, and had learned and invented many ways of shirking. After supper they announced that they were going to straighten up the room, and for five minutes, during which they had scarcely made a beginning, they worked diligently. Then Ellen threw herself down on the bed, and declared that she was tired. For a few minutes there was a welcome silence, then Ellen began to giggle and got up and left the room. By the time she returned, Mabel had taken her place on the bed.

"Sarah," Ellen began pleasantly; and Sarah, marking the place in her book, looked up despairingly.

"What is it?"

"I met the bell-boy in the hall, and he said that your brother is here."

Ellen was frightened by the sudden terror on Sarah's face.

"My brother!"

"Yes. Oh, nothing is wrong. I think he is just here in town and wishes to see you. And there are people in the reception room, so Eugene will bring him up here in a few minutes. Mabel and I will go out."

Mabel got up quickly from the bed.

"Yes, of course."

Sarah rose to her feet.

"*Ach*, you need n't go! And" — she looked round the disorderly room — "could n't we fix here a little up once?"

Ellen and Mabel shouted with laughter.

"There is n't time to fix here a little up once."

When the door was closed, Sarah looked about once more. She was frightened by William's coming, she was distressed that he should see such a room. Ellen and Mabel had not even made their beds. Those, at least, she would spread up. If he would only delay for a few minutes, she might make the room look presentable. She drew the curtain across the alcove where the wash-

stands stood, and hung her room-mates' dresses in the closets. For an instant she was tempted to toss them in on the floor and shut the door on them. But Sarah had had too few nice dresses in her life to treat them roughly. The shoes were swept into the closets, the bureau drawers were filled and closed; then, as she heard a step in the hall, she smoothed her hair and went to the door.

"Wil—" she began, and then gasped. It was a man who stood without, but it was not William. No; it was not even a man. There was a fluffy tie above the collar of his rain-coat, his derby hat was pinned on with a hat-pin, the hand which he held out was decked with rings.

"What do you mean?" demanded Sarah, trembling.

"Are n't you glad to see me?" giggled Ellen.

"Where is my brother William?"

"I am your brother William. I — Why,

look at this room! She has put it all in order! Mabel!"

There was a burst of wild laughter, then the two girls ran down the hall to return the clothes to the girl to whose brother they belonged. "I never knew such a joke."

Sarah went inside and shut the door. Then she locked it and stood with clenched hands. It was cruel to play such a trick. They had frightened her, and now she was desperately disappointed. And she had lost at least a half-hour, and it was only two hours until the lights were put out. She would not let the girls come in again; they would not study, they might visit their friends. With shaking hands she opened her books.

But she could not study. She heard another burst of laughter. Probably they were telling the other girls about it, and they were laughing at her.

Presently her heart ceased to beat so rapidly and she settled down to work once

more. Perhaps they would not come back. She knew that it was against the rules to go from room to room during study-hours, but they did not keep rules.

"'Man is the only living creature that can stand or walk erect,'" she began aloud. "'Man is the only living creature that can stand or walk erect. The human skeleton —'"

The knob was softly turned; then there was a knock at the door. Sarah did not answer.

"Let us in, Sarah."

Still Sarah made no response.

"Open the door, Sarah."

"No, I am not going to open the door," cried Sarah shrilly. "You can just stay out."

A long silence succeeded. She settled again to her work.

"'Man is the only living creature that can stand or walk erect. The human skeleton —'"

When there was another knock at the door, Sarah started up furiously.

"You can knock all night and I won't let you in," she shrieked. "You are all the time after me, you — "

Again the knob was turned. She did not realize that the voice which bade her unlock the door was lower and softer than those to which she had been listening. She was too angry to distinguish one voice from another. The girl who had withstood the persecutions of an Uncle Daniel would not endure forever the teasing of two girls of her own age. She seized her pitcher from the stand. Not without much spilling of water on floor and bed, she climbed to the footboard.

"Will you go 'way, then!"

"Sarah, open the door."

"I won't." And Sarah turned the pitcher upside down, its mouth protruding from the transom. There was a splash, a quick exclamation, and then a stern command.

"Open this door, or I shall send for the principal."

Sarah moved but slowly, not from choice

now, but from fright. A terrible, unbelievable suspicion entered her mind. It seemed that her hand would never be able to turn the key in the door, that strong little hand, which lifted so easily the great, brimming pitcher. If it had been the teacher who lived downstairs, the cross teacher with the flowered dressing-gown, she could have endured it. If it had been the principal himself, it would not have been so terrible. But standing on the threshold, wiping the water from her eyes, and with dripping hair and soaking shirt-waist, stood Miss Ellingwood.

Behind her, Ellen Ritter and Mabel Thorn twisted their faces to keep from exploding in shocked and delighted laughter, and down the hall, doors were opening and excited voices asked what was the matter.

CHAPTER IV

SARAH EXPLAINS

MANY years afterward Sarah said that nothing in her life had ever frightened her like the sight of Miss Ellingwood standing outside her door, with the water dripping from her hair and dress. Miss Ellingwood herself came to laugh heartily at it, but no amount of teasing could ever induce Sarah even to smile. It seemed an hour until Miss Ellingwood spoke, and in that time Sarah saw clearly not only the laughing, triumphant faces of her room-mates immediately before her, but of all the family at home: William and Laura, who were sending her to school at a great sacrifice, the twins and Albert, who had faith in her, and to whom she should have been an example. She seemed to hear herself trying to explain to them.

"You see, it was this way," she would begin. But she never got any further. There was no explanation, no excuse to make.

"This," they would say, "this is what you do with your education!"

In reality, it was only a moment until Miss Ellingwood spoke. Her eyes flashed; it seemed to Sarah that they would burn through her.

"Come to my room in half an hour. I don't want to hear anything from you now." Then she turned to the girls laughing behind her, and her eyes flashed still more brightly. Perhaps it was for their illumination that the flash existed. "You have been here for a year, and you know the rules of the school. Dr. Ellis will hold you responsible for any misconduct in this room, rather than a newcomer."

Ellen and Mabel looked at each other guiltily as Miss Ellingwood's door closed behind her. Then they went to their own room.

Sarah was not to be seen, and their un-

easiness turned to fright. There was no exit save through the window, and they were on the third floor. It could not be possible that she was as badly frightened as that!

"Sarah!" cried Mabel sharply.

Sarah appeared from the closet. She had taken off her school dress, and carried the blue one across her arm.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ellen.

Sarah did not answer. If she tried to speak, she should scream. She would at least put on her second-best dress and brush her hair before she went to Miss Ellingwood's room. She remembered in agony that she had never worn her red dress; probably she would never have an opportunity now, at least at the Normal School. She looked at her little silver watch with eyes which could scarcely find the hands.

Mabel and Ellen avoided each other's glance, and sat down by the table.

"What is the History lesson for to-

morrow, Sarah?" asked Ellen in a tone which was meant to be conciliatory.

Sarah silently pushed forward her note-book. She was dressed now and staring at her Physiology. "Man is the only living creature that can stand or walk erect." In what long-past stage of her life had she read that?

At twenty-eight minutes past eight, she closed her book and went into the hall, where, watch in hand, she lingered outside Miss Ellingwood's door until the hand pointed to the half-hour. Then, fearfully, she rapped.

A low "Come in" answered. It took all her strength to turn the knob. She saw nothing of the beautiful room with its books, its fireplace, its wide and crowded desk, its low tea-table; she saw only Miss Ellingwood entering from her bedroom beyond, her curls wet and shining, clad in a fresh, stiffly starched white shirt-waist and a dry skirt. She went across to the big chair before her desk, and turning her head away, stooped

to straighten out some papers. She saw the blue dress, and the smooth hair. Both judge and defendant, she said to herself, were dressed for the occasion.

"Now, Sarah," she began, "suppose you tell me how it is that an inoffensive non-combatant, rapping at your door, is received with a shower of water. Your room-mates asked me to get you to let them in. They said that you had locked them out, and they could n't study. Is this true?"

"Yes, ma'am," faltered Sarah.

"Why did you do it?"

"Because — they — *ach!*" Sarah burst into a flood of tears. She did not wish to tell on them, she could not bear to recount the foolish trick which had been played on her. It seemed so ridiculous now to have been taken in. It was so absurd, — her anxiety at hearing that William had come, her mystification at the foolish figure which met her at the door, her rage, when she realized what they had done. That was worst of all.

"*Ach*, if you will only let me make it up to you," she cried. "I will never do such a thing again. I will dry your hair if they are wet yet, and I could iron your shirt-waist, and if it is spoiled, I could try to earn some money to buy you a new one. Or William would send me the money right away. I could give you my umbrella to make up, or my f-fountain-pen. They are new — they —"

"Mercy, child!" Miss Ellingwood put her arm round Sarah, who in her anguish had moved close to her side. "Don't cry about my clothes, *please*. They are almost dry already, and water could n't hurt them. I'll forgive you willingly, entirely, Sarah. But you must never do anything of the kind again. You see the evening study-hour is meant for work. You have long hours in the afternoon and earlier in the evening to play, and all day Saturday, and you need every minute in study-hour. By the time you get settled to work again, you will have lost a whole hour."

"I know it, I know it!" wailed Sarah. "That is the trouble. They will not let me study. When — when they are out I can study, but not when they are with. I will have to go home. I am anyhow too dumb for anybody to learn me anything."

Miss Ellingwood hid her face against Sarah's shoulder.

"Say that again, dear."

"*Ach*, I mean I am too — too stupid to be taught."

"That is better. Now —" Miss Ellingwood meditated for an instant. She did not approve of putting three persons into a room; even she and Laura had been a little crowded. It would be very difficult for this child to get into studious habits if she were constantly in the room with Ellen and Mabel. They were very evidently not diligent. "Suppose you bring your books over here this evening, Sarah. Perhaps you can study here."

Sarah was not gone for two minutes. Ellen and Mabel had disappeared, and she

gathered her books together, made another dab at her hair with her stiff brush, and was back.

Miss Ellingwood had pulled a chair up to the side of her own desk.

"There, Sarah, is a chair and a foot-stool. Now, if I can help you, ask me." And she bent her head over her own work.

Peace descended upon Sarah's heart. Once, she sighed, and Miss Ellingwood looked up.

"Are you tired?"

"*Ach*, no! I am just thinking. It is so nice and still here. I could learn the whole book through."

Once she ventured to ask a question.

"Please, ma'am, it gives a word here. I cannot say it right, s-y-n, swine, t-a-x, tax, swinetax. Is that the way to say it?"

"No. S-y-n, sin — syntax. It is not English to say, 'it gives a word here,' Sarah. Try again."

"Here is a word," said Sarah painstakingly. "*Ach*, — no, I don't mean *ach!*

But will you tell me sometimes when I am wrong?"

"Yes, indeed."

Sarah gazed at Miss Ellingwood with deep admiration and gratitude, and set again to work. She had only the simple Latin rules to commit to memory, and then all the lessons assigned her would be learned, even though it was not until the day after tomorrow that she recited them.

But the page of rules was the most difficult task she had attempted. The words seemed to dance before her eyes, the lines were crooked, the letters blurred. She propped her head on her hand, and rubbed her eyes a countless number of times.

Miss Ellingwood was too much engrossed by her task to see. Each year under the direction of the teacher of Elocution, the Junior class gave a play. It was given usually the week before Christmas, and Miss Ellingwood had selected an arrangement of Dickens's "Christmas Carol," whose spirit

was so appropriate to the season. She was going over it now, so that the parts should be fresh in her mind before she began to get acquainted with the Juniors in her classes, and she smiled at old Scrooge and sighed over Tiny Tim. She had quite forgotten the student at her side.

Then, suddenly, there was a dull little bump, as her guest slid from her chair to the floor, asleep. Strange to say, the fall did not rouse her. Miss Ellingwood thought that she must be sleepy indeed.

"Come, Sarah," she said. "You must get up and go to bed."

With Miss Ellingwood's help, Sarah got up slowly, and sat down on her chair, and was immediately asleep once more. Miss Ellingwood was a little frightened. The child was evidently exhausted, which was not strange after her passion of tears. Miss Ellingwood glanced at her again, then at the couch which had been made up for a guest who had not arrived.

In a moment she went down the hall and rapped at the door of Sarah's room. No one was within. Smothered laughter a little farther down the hall implied the presence of Ellen and Mabel. Miss Ellingwood took a few steps in that direction, then returned. The warning bell would ring in a moment; after that, for fifteen minutes, the students were allowed to visit one another. This was really the first day of school, and rules were not so strictly kept. And Miss Ellingwood hated to scold.

She pushed open Sarah's door and went in, to look for her school dress and the things she would need for the night.

The smothered laughter became open shrieks as the warning bell rang.

"She's a perfect little spitfire," Ellen Ritter was saying. "I wish you could have seen her face when she saw me all dressed up. It was white and purple by turns, she was so angry."

Ethel Davis and Gertrude Manley, going

arm-in-arm down the hall, had stopped at the door to hear, and the group of sub-Juniors opened to let them in. Blonde Ethel and dark-eyed Gertrude were Juniors, the next year they would be Middlers, and after that Seniors, and they sometimes allowed the dignity of their position to awe the sub-Juniors.

"I think it was a pretty mean trick to play on such a youngster," said Ethel hotly. "Now, if you had played it on Mabel, or Mabel on you, it might have had some point."

"Oh, she can take care of herself," laughed Ellen. "You need n't worry about her! Then she locked the door, and would n't let us in, and Mabel and I were very anxious to study, and —"

"Doubtless," laughed Gertrude.

"Well, we were, and we knocked and asked politely to be let in, and not a word would she say. So we went over to the new hall teacher and told her that we were afraid our little room-mate was ill. So she came over

and rapped, and there was no answer but a wild yell. And then — "

Ellen rolled over on the bed, helpless with laughter, and Mabel took up the tale.

"Then out of the transom came a pitcherful of water, — bang!"

"Not on Miss Ellingwood!" said Ethel.

"Yes, right on Miss Ellingwood."

Mabel's cheeks were flushed with pleasure. Ethel and Gertrude never paid much attention to her, and it was delightful to have them listen so closely.

"What did she do?"

"Told the youngster to come over in half an hour, and the youngster put on her Sunday dress and went over."

"And what then?" asked a breathless sub-Junior. "Did Miss Ellingwood nearly murder her? That's what I should have done."

"No. I guess Sarah told her the whole tale, because in a few minutes she came back and got her books, and she's been over there

all evening. There 'll be no more fun on this hall with a teacher's pet spying on us. I suppose Miss Ellingwood will come in after the retiring bell, and read us a lecture."

But Miss Ellingwood did not appear except to say that Sarah would spend the night with her, and that she wished everything to be very quiet. Mabel and Ellen looked at each other after she went out.

"What did I say?" said Mabel. "She 'll tell everything we do."

"We 'll settle her," answered Ellen cheerfully. "Oh, dear, to-morrow the grind begins!"

Sarah did not see the sun rise the next morning, nor hear the first sounds of life in the great building. She did not even stir at the thunderous rising-bell. When she finally woke, she saw Miss Ellingwood standing by her bed.

"It 's time to get up, Sarah."

Sarah rubbed her eyes.

"The rising-bell has rung, dear, and you 'll

just have time to jump into my bathtub and then get dressed quickly. Your things are all here."

Sarah looked confusedly about her, while she struggled out of bed.

"Did I stay here?"

"Yes."

"All night?"

"Yes."

"Did I oversleep myself?"

"No, you slept till just the proper time. Now, run along."

It was a pleasure to see the bright eyes and glowing cheeks with which Sarah presently appeared. She had never seen a bathroom like Miss Ellingwood's, she had never smelled such soap or seen so many mysterious brushes and sponges. She had been a little frightened by the depth of the cool water in the tub which Miss Ellingwood had filled for her. She did not like to say that she had never been in a bathtub before, because Miss Ellingwood seemed to expect her

to know all about bathtubs. Miss Ellingwood had never lived on a farm.

Never before had Sarah dressed in such a physical and mental glow. She tied the ribbon on her hair just as the breakfast-bell began to ring.

"Come here, and I'll button your dress for you. I brought your school dress over. You poor little chicken, did you think that you would make a better impression on the ogress if you put on a better dress? If the girls bother you again, you must bring your books over here. Now, come along."

Sarah drew a deep breath of delight. She had never had such a good time. She looked once more about the pretty room before the door closed. Would she see it again? And then Sarah's heart was guilty of a very wicked wish.

"*Ach*, I wish," she said to herself, as they went downstairs to breakfast, "I wish those girls would cut always up so that I could not study!"

CHAPTER V

PROFESSOR MINTURN'S EXPERIMENT

It needed no "cutting-up" of Sarah's room-mates to send her again to Miss Ellingwood's room. She had just settled fearfully to study the next evening, when there was a rap at the door, and Miss Ellingwood appeared. She was amused at herself because her room had seemed strangely lonely without the little figure bending over the table at her side.

"Don't you want to bring your books over to my room?" she asked; and Sarah responded with delighted alacrity.

When Ellen and Mabel came in and found that she had gone, they were not at all pleased. They knew that Sarah had finished her Geography lesson and they had hoped to have some help. When they discovered the neatly drawn maps in Sarah's drawer in the table, they decided that they would do as well.

"We 'll get even with her for tattling," laughed Mabel, as she prepared to copy them with tissue paper and black impression paper.

As the days passed, it seemed to Sarah that she was living in a new world. When she was not in class or in the gymnasium, she was in Miss Ellingwood's room, or walking with Miss Ellingwood. Miss Ellingwood helped her over the hard places in her work, she laughed at her mistakes in English, and corrected them, she let Sarah help to serve the tea when the boys and girls came in in the afternoons.

The Juniors came oftenest; they were in Miss Ellingwood's class, and as the time for the giving of the "Christmas Carol" approached, they were there constantly. Sarah had read the story; she knew how old Scrooge's sordid heart, devoted to money-getting, was filled with the Christmas spirit by the appearance of his dead partner, Jacob Marley, and by the three ghosts of Christ-

mas Present, Christmas Past, and Christmas Future. Ethel Davis and Gertrude Manley were to be Mrs. Cratchit and Fred's wife, — they were the leading women's parts. To Sarah's thinking, there were no rôles so interesting as those of the ghosts, which were taken by boys. Their costumes were so wonderful, they moved about so mysteriously, they were able to introduce so many original devices. Perhaps next year, if she were promoted to the Junior class, and if there were a ghost in the play, Miss Ellingwood might give the part to her, and then she would be completely happy.

During the practicing, she took her books into Miss Ellingwood's bedroom, and sitting there at her work, she could hear the Juniors laughing merrily. When it was time for the tableaux, in which Scrooge was to see his past and future, and all the harm he had done in the present, they opened the door into the bedroom, so that they might have a double stage.

It was then that Edward Ellis, Dr. Ellis's son, who was a Junior and represented Jacob Marley, came and stood near Sarah's table and recited his sepulchral part.

"'Expect the second spirit on the next night at the same hour!'" he would say, while his chains clanked and rattled, and the blood of one hearer, at least, congealed in her veins. "'The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.'"

And then, "the apparition walked backward, and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open."

Sarah had heard Miss Ellingwood read the directions, and Edward obeyed them with many ghostly variations. Once Sarah had been called upon to lift the window by jerks and starts.

In the midst of all the delightful excite-

ment of school life, Sarah often scolded herself for not feeling perfectly happy and contented. She was learning more than she ever dreamed of learning, she had the constant association of Miss Ellingwood, she practically lived in Miss Ellingwood's luxurious rooms. But she had no life outside them, and it was that which troubled her. She realized that there was a great deal of fun in the school in which she had no share. There were parades which appeared simultaneously with the stroke of ten, beginning at the upper corner of the woman's side of the great building, and winding in and out the halls, and down the stairways, like a long snake, to the lower corner and back again. There were feasts by day and night; there was dancing in the gymnasium after the classes were over. Sarah was not invited to the feasts, and she looked on silently at the dancing. It was true that she did not know how to dance, but if stout Mabel Thorn could learn, she could also, she was sure. She tried the steps

sometimes when she was alone in Miss Ellingwood's room.

Mabel and Ellen ignored her completely. They did not always speak to her when she came into the room. Once they allowed her to search for her maps, which Ellen had been tracing, and which she had hastily covered with her papers. Gradually, the whole school became aware that her room-mates avoided her, and no one was clear-sighted enough to see that it was a compliment to Sarah. When Ellen and Mabel were called to the office and reproved for making unnecessary noise, they complained loudly that Sarah had reported them, forgetting the many times that Miss Jones had come upstairs in the middle of the night to remonstrate with them. The other students, even Ethel Davis and Gertrude Manley, who thought they were just, began to look a little askance at Sarah. No fault is more hated by students than tale-bearing, and no suspicion flies more quickly.

Ellen's and Mabel's rudeness did not trouble

Sarah. That did not seem worth worrying about. It was her failure to make friends with Ethel and Gertrude, and the other Juniors whom she so admired, that troubled her. Once she had called Ethel by her first name, and Ethel had responded with a quick, "What did you say, Miss Wenner?" She had grown accustomed to having her teachers call her Miss Wenner. But these boys and girls, — that was different.

"At home," she said sorrowfully to herself, "I was always common" (friendly); "and here I am just the same. But these people do not like it, they are too high up."

It could not be because she was a newcomer, because they were gracious to other newcomers. They called even the careless girl who spilled her ink, Mary. They had teas in their room to which only newcomers were invited, but Sarah was not among them. Sarah was convinced that it was some grave fault in herself which made them avoid her.

Fortunately her work occupied most of

her thoughts, and when that was over there were always her letters home to be written. She gave vivid, illustrated accounts of those same feasts and parades at which she looked longingly, and the home people never guessed that it was a lonely outsider who described them, sometimes in prose, sometimes in much-admired jingle. She even described Ellen dressed to represent William, as though it were all a great joke, which she had enjoyed immensely. She told about Edward Ellis's wonderful "Bobs," a collie, who could spring up to the low branches of the apple trees in the fields at the back of the campus, and who could perform many wonderful tricks. She drew pictures of him, and of Professor Minturn, who strode about the room while he lectured, and of the Geography teacher, who always folded his hands so precisely and sat so still.

"Sarah 's so dumb,
It makes him numb,"

she wrote brilliantly.

Laura and the twins wrote to her regularly, the twins with wild, childish scrawls, which hinted surprises at Christmas, and Laura with funny accounts of her own difficulties.

"You should have seen my waffles last evening," she would say. "They were black on one side and a delicate buff on the other."

"Laura made waffles," the twins would write. "William ate seven and we four."

Occasionally there would come a note in William's clear hand.

"Enclosed find a little spending-money. We hear that you are doing well. Be a good girl."

It would have been a very ungrateful girl who could have been *very* unhappy after that.

There were Christmas surprises in her cupboard, also. William's gifts of money had been well spent. On the shelf above the secretary at home, there had stood the battered school-books and a worn copy of "Thaddeus of Warsaw." Poor Thaddeus was to be over-

shadowed henceforth by several well-bound companions. There was "Westward Ho" for William, and "Lorna Doone" for Laura, and "Alice in Wonderland" for the twins, and a fairy-book for Albert. Rarely does the approach of Christmas find a person so entirely satisfied with her gifts as Sarah was. But Miss Ellingwood had selected them, and Miss Ellingwood was infallible.

There was another present which she was taking home. She had read halfway through the upper shelf of Miss Ellingwood's story-books, and she meant to remember them all, and then during the vacation, she would sit down before the fire after she had washed the supper dishes, and she would take Albert in her arms, and a twin would perch on each side of her on the old settle, and they should hear some stories that were stories.

She had become well acquainted with several of the professors who came in to call on Miss Ellingwood in the evenings. One was Professor Minturn, for whom she had read

the paragraph of history on the first day of school. He seemed to grow more nervous each day, and more certain that his pupils might do more work if they would.

"That sub-Junior and Junior History might just as well be combined," he would say irritably to Miss Ellingwood. "Then they would finish the American History in the sub-Junior year, and a thorough course of General History could be divided between the Junior and the Middle years. The present arrangement is senseless."

One day he asked Sarah to remain after class. The sub-Juniors looked at one another and laughed. By this time, suspicion had spread through the whole school.

"He probably wants to ask her whether you and Ellen study your lessons," whispered Mabel's neighbor.

Sarah was startled by the first question which Professor Minturn addressed to her.

"Are you well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever been sick?"

"I had the measles and the mumps." This sounded like the questions of the gymnasium director. "And the whooping cough I had, too."

"Do you take regular exercise?"

"Yes, sir."

"You like to study, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. How should you like to do a little extra work for me?"

All Sarah's life she had been doing extra physical work. She had taken her mother's duties gradually upon her shoulders as she became ill; she had then taken a large part of her father's work. But hitherto no one had ever complimented her by asking her to do extra study. Her cheeks glowed.

"I would like it very much."

"Very well," answered Professor Minturn, beaming with satisfaction. "I wish you to prepare eight pages of history instead of four. Each day I shall ask you some ques-

tions after class." Professor Minturn smiled. He thought that he had discovered a way of trying a long-planned experiment.

The Geography teacher had long since noticed that Sarah always knew her lessons. One day he asked her in his precise way whether she had been over the book before.

"No, sir. But I studied Geography with my father, and it is not so hard for me like it is for some people. I know what is in this book"

The Geography teacher gave her a little examination.

"Why, I believe you are ready for State Board now. There is n't any reason why you should waste your time with this class. How would you like to come into the Physical Geography class with the Juniors?"

Sarah gasped. That would bring her into constant association with Ethel and Gertrude, the objects of her devotion.

"I — I am afraid I am too — too dumb, *ach*, stupid, I mean."

The teacher laughed. All Sarah's teachers laughed at her more or less. It was only yesterday that the gymnasium teacher had laughed at her because she talked about "planting the smallpox" when she meant vaccinating.

"You are n't too stupid at all," the teacher of Geography assured her. "To-morrow I 'll speak to Dr. Ellis about it. In the mean time, you report with the Juniors."

Sarah's room-mates were not at all pleased by her promotion. Hereafter there would be no maps lying in her desk ready to be copied, and their marks would be materially lowered. They felt that her change of classes was a personal grievance.

"No wonder that you get along," said Ellen rudely. "You are what we call a teacher's pet. The other evening I went to Miss Ellingwood's room to get permission to go downstairs, and the Latin teacher was helping you. I don't think it is fair."

Sarah opened her mouth to speak, then

closed it, flushing scarlet. The Latin teacher did help her, but not with her regular lessons. His helping her was a joke between him and Miss Ellingwood. They had a great many jokes together, many of which Sarah did not understand. He said that he should have to have some excuse for coming to see Miss Ellingwood so often; he would pretend that Sarah was his pupil. And so he used to give her simple sight translations to read. It was not part of her daily lesson; with that of course he never helped her at all. It was true that she studied her Latin grammar very hard, so that she should be able to read at sight for Mr. Sattarlee without very much stumbling, and she paid all the more attention to her daily lessons. But he did not help her with them.

Ellen's remark seemed like an accusation of dishonesty. But she did not explain, she could not. It seemed like disloyalty to talk about the Latin teacher and his coming to Miss Ellingwood's room. He seemed to be-

long to Miss Ellingwood, and if she were kind enough to allow Sarah to be there when he came, — and he never came unless Sarah was there, — it would be all the more contemptible to talk to Ellen Ritter about it. Sarah hunted through her drawer for a fresh pencil and went back to Miss Ellingwood's room. Her books had not been in her own room for a month, nor had she slept there.

By this time Sarah had begun to think that the curriculum was very carelessly planned. She was even with the Juniors in History and Physical Geography and Latin, which were the three most difficult subjects of the six which the Juniors had to pass.

She did not realize that she was growing a little tired. She could scarcely keep her eyes open until bedtime; it seemed to her that the Juniors, busily practicing for their play, or Mr. Sattarlee, calling upon Miss Ellingwood, would never go. Gymnasium had become more of a bore than ever. She disliked it before because it was monotonous;

now her step lagged in the marches and her arms fell heavily in the drills because she was tired.

She went walking less often with Miss Ellingwood; Miss Ellingwood went with Mr. Sattarlee. Miss Ellingwood had begun to be a little absent-minded. Perhaps that was the reason that she did not notice that Sarah's cheeks had lost their ruddy color, and that she no longer ran briskly down the hall when she came from class.

Sometimes, when Miss Ellingwood was away, Sarah opened the door and peered out into the hall. Down in Gertrude's room there was the sound of merry laughter. She and Ethel were constantly inventing some new entertainment. Once, when they had put up a sign at the corner of the hall, notifying the public that they meant that evening to gratify a plebeian fondness for Bermuda onions and bread and butter, Sarah almost went to the feast. The notice begged all those who liked onions to come, and warned

all others to spend the evening with their friends in distant parts of the building. Sarah would cheerfully have eaten crow in such company. But she did not dare to go.

CHAPTER VI

THE "CHRISTMAS CAROL"

To Sarah's surprise and delight, she had Miss Ellingwood almost entirely to herself the day of the play. Miss Ellingwood always prided herself upon the absence of the mad rush which is supposed to accompany and follow the dress rehearsal. She was especially anxious that this play should succeed, since it was the first appearance of her class.

The dress rehearsal had been given the night before. Sarah had watched it, entranced, from the edge of the stage, where she waited for possible errands. The Juniors paid no attention to her, but she was too interested to care. The extraordinary make-up of old Scrooge, the mysterious gliding about of the ghosts, the thrilling tableaux, directed by Miss Ellingwood from behind the scenes, —Sarah had never dreamed of anything like

this. And it would be still more wonderful the next night, from the front, when strange green and purple lights were to follow the ghosts about, and when there would be the added excitement of a large audience. This would be a story to tell the twins! But could the twins be persuaded to believe such wonders? Sarah sighed a little. She was going home the day after the play, but it seemed weeks ahead.

Miss Ellingwood slipped into the chapel for a last look about before she started with Sarah for a walk. She glanced over the properties,—Scrooge's bowl of gruel, his candlestick, the chains and money-boxes which were to be rattled upon the approach of Jacob Marley's ghost, the crutch for Tiny Tim, the old clothes for Mrs. Dilber.

"It has all gone too smoothly," she said to Sarah. "There has n't been a hitch anywhere."

"I should think that would be good," said Sarah.

Miss Ellingwood shook her head.

"No, when things go so well at the rehearsal they don't go so well afterwards, usually. At any rate, nobody will be tired."

"The ghosts went skating," said Sarah. "I saw them go off with their skates, and take the car."

Miss Ellingwood frowned.

"That was a little risky." Then she ran lightly down the steps. "But they'll be back. Come on." She was only a little older than the oldest pupil in her classes, and it was difficult to be always grave and dignified. Dr. Ellis watched her and smiled.

"I hope Miss Ellingwood's preparations are all made," he said to his secretary. "She's a fore-handed person."

The secretary looked up quizzically at the sky. He was inclined to be pessimistic.

"The leading members of the cast have gone out to the park to skate. They don't run the cars when it snows."

Dr. Ellis also walked to the window and looked out.

"Was Edward with them?"

"Yes."

"Then they'll be back. Edward knows all about the cars."

An hour later, Miss Ellingwood and Sarah returned, laughing and covered with snow. Miss Ellingwood glanced in at the office-door.

"Have the boys come?"

The secretary answered her.

"No. I should n't be surprised if they did n't get here."

Some of the color faded from Miss Ellingwood's rosy cheeks.

"But they *must*. What makes you say that?"

"The cars don't run in snows like this."

"But they could get a carriage and drive."

The secretary shook his head dolefully.

"There are n't many houses out there."

"But they could walk."

"Not ten miles in this snow. Not in time, anyway."

Miss Ellingwood spent the next hour look-

ing out of the window. The cars from the park connected with the Normal School cars at the square. At the end of the hour, when darkness had fallen and no boys had appeared, Miss Ellingwood slipped into the dress which Sarah had laid out for her, and ran down to the office. It was still snowing heavily.

"They're not here?"

"No."

Miss Ellingwood went toward the telephone-booth. There was one way out of the difficulty.

"I am going to telephone to the car-barn and ask them to send out a car. It does n't make any difference what it costs."

The secretary threw out a crumb of comfort.

"Dr. Ellis attended to that, a few minutes ago."

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Miss Ellingwood, with a great rise of spirits. "Then they 'll certainly be here."

She ate her supper with a good appetite, and then went up to the chapel.

Sarah dressed slowly. Ellen and Mabel, having seen the flurry which preceded other Junior plays, laughed scornfully. They did not like Miss Ellingwood.

"It 'll be a failure," declared Mabel. "I could manage a play better." She looked impertinently at Sarah. "Now don't you go and tell her, Sarah."

Sarah did not answer. The walk had made her tired. She meant to go early to the chapel and take a book. Then she could get a good seat, and could study her extra history lesson until the play began.

She heard voices as she opened the chapel door. She thought at first that some one had mounted the stage for a final bit of practice, then she saw that it was Miss Ellingwood. Just in front of the stage stood Dr. Ellis.

"I 've had a telephone message, Miss Ellingwood. They have tried to get a car

out, but they say the snow is so soft and heavy that they can't get out and back before ten o'clock."

"Then my play is doomed!"

"Is n't there anything that can be done?"

The principal was much disturbed. He prided himself upon the prompt performance of all school exercises. In this case, his own son helped to cause the failure.

"Nothing," answered Miss Ellingwood helplessly. "They have the principal parts. They 're the play."

"Could n't any one take their places?"

"No, not possibly. All the Junior boys are in the tableaux, and anyhow, no one knows the lines. I could do it myself, but I have to direct behind the scenes. It is hopeless."

"We 'll have to postpone it till after Christmas, I suppose?"

Miss Ellingwood sat down wearily on the nearest chair.

"Oh, I can't! All the spirit will have

gone out of it. And it's a Christmas play!"

"Then we will have to give it up."

Miss Ellingwood looked at him dismally. Then her brows knitted. Could she take the parts? Could they manage the tableaux without her? It would make no difference whether the ghosts were men or women. Anything would be better than postponement.

"Perhaps," she began slowly. "No, it can't be done. I suppose a notice will have to be put up on the door, and if you will send Eugene for some of the boys, we will straighten up the stage. The case is hopeless."

It was at this moment that little Sarah Wenner appeared by the side of the tall principal. Her cheeks were flushed, she clasped her hands across the bosom of her red dress.

"Is it anything I can do?" she asked. "I know what the ghosts should say, and

where they should stand always. You begin here, and then you wheel a little piece up there and — *Ach*, I know it all by heart. I heard them say it every evening when they practiced. You said — you said — "

But the impulsive courage which had prompted her speech had fled, her voice failed, and she stood abashed, her face growing scarlet.

It was several minutes before she dared to look up. She expected that Miss Ellingwood would reprove her sternly. She knew better than to interrupt older persons like that, but she had forgotten. She was always forgetting. In one awful moment of forgetfulness she had emptied a pitcher of water on Miss Ellingwood's head. Her presumption in offering overwhelmed her. They would think that she was crazy. If she could only get away, where she would not need to look up and see the frowns on their faces.

"*Ach*," she began, "I do not know what I am talking about. Sometimes I act so

dumb. I—" She backed slowly away. "I—"

Suddenly Miss Ellingwood was at her side. She seized her arm, and held her for a moment without speaking.

"Wait a minute." Then she looked up at Dr. Ellis. "I believe — I believe it could be done. Come, Sarah."

Dr. Ellis followed them behind the scenes.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes. Postpone the ringing of the bell till a quarter after eight. And send all the Juniors here at once. Sarah, run up and get into your gymnasium suit, and bring two stiff petticoats and my long white wrapper, and tell Ethel and Gertrude to come as fast as they can. Go like a breeze, Sarah dear."

Sarah, in the character of Jacob Kalb pursuing the twins, never moved faster. Ethel and Gertrude, finishing their leisurely dressing, watched her fly down the hall, after she had summoned them.

"That wild youngster 's in her gym suit,

and has a lot of white stuff over her arm. What can she be up to?"

"Hard to tell. Let's hurry."

When they clambered up to the stage, having taken the short cut through the chapel, they stood still, gaping.

Miss Ellingwood's cheeks were red, her hair ruffled.

"Robert, you will have to read the part of Marley's ghost from behind the scenes. You'll have to speak as Edward did and move about. I'll help you. And Sarah knows the other parts. As the Ghost of Christmas Past, —here, Sarah, is your tunic and your golden belt." Miss Ellingwood held up a handful of white and gold, digged from the bottom of the property-box. "It's really better to have a girl for this part. Your hair must be down, there! and powdered, and you must make your voice as thin and clear as you can. As the Ghost of Christmas Present, you will sit here on this throne. We will have it turned this way, so

that there can be a prompter behind it. And as the Ghost of Christmas Future, you will be in black. Ethel and Gertrude will help you dress, and there will be plenty of time. But oh, Sarah, are you *sure* you know the parts?"

Sarah looked round at the circle of astonished, doubting faces.

"Yes, ma'am," she declared solemnly. "Believe me, I do."

"Then get into your dress, quickly, and then you and Scrooge go over there and go over your parts. No, we'll do it here. If anybody comes into the chapel, and overhears, he'll just have to, that's all."

There were early comers, visitors from town, who did not know that the hour had been changed. They heard murmurs from behind the curtain, but they laughed and talked among themselves, and paid no heed.

The students did not appear until the bell rang. They were thankful for the last moment to finish a bit of packing or a visit. There were no study hours, — this was one

of the great occasions of the year. They did not know how narrowly they had missed having any play at all, or how its success still hung upon the slender thread of a small girl's memory.

The cheerless, unpleasant room upon which the curtain lifted gave no hint of the Christmas spirit which already excited the great school. Scrooge sat beside his table, unshaven, wizened, clad in an old dressing-gown and slippers, with a night-cap on his head. He was eating a bowl of gruel, and at the same time trying to identify the peculiar substance of which it was made, and also to keep the audience from suspecting that there was anything the matter with it. When he discovered that it was cotton, he made a resolve of revenge upon the Junior girls who had prepared it, which had nothing to do with the play. It helped him, however, to growl out maledictions upon the poor and those who relieved their distress.

It was then that he was disturbed by the

clanking of chains and money-boxes, and the voice of his old partner, Marley, was heard faintly from behind the curtain which divided the front and back of the stage. Marley reproved him for his grasping, cruel spirit, his sordid struggle for wealth, and Scrooge cowered and listened in terror to the promise of the ghost that he should be visited by three others.

The curtain went down and rose almost immediately. There had been only faint applause. Scrooge had done his best, but the ghost, speaking from behind the scenes, had not the power to amuse and thrill which he would have had if he had been able to appear. Miss Ellingwood remembered, with a pang, Edward Ellis's delightful vanishing through the window.

Miss Ellingwood's face was pale. She realized that the first scene had fallen flat. And they were depending for the success of the second upon little Sarah Wenner, who had never even practiced with the rest of the

cast! It had been madness in Sarah to offer, it had been worse than madness for Miss Ellingwood to accept.

She peered out from behind the scenes, her hand on Sarah's shoulder. Scrooge was in bed, his night-cap tassel nodded from his pillow. It was time for Sarah to go on. Directions trembled on Miss Ellingwood's lips, but she said nothing. It was too late now to advise.

The light was dim, and the audience could see nothing but the outlines of the old four-post bed, and a faint, tiny, white figure, which glided about, now slowly, now swiftly, once with a dash of yellow light upon it, once with a faint glow of purple. Her dress was short, her feet were sandaled, she looked even shorter than she was. The audience gasped. They thought that Edward Ellis was to play the part. Who was this sprite who moved about so lightly? They leaned forward breathlessly as the fairy thing approached Scrooge's bed, and drew the curtain

back. A trembling, faltering voice issued from within.

"'Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold me?'"

It seemed to Miss Ellingwood that long moments passed before the answer came. The child had never been on any stage in all her life. Miss Ellingwood knew what stage fright was. She was suffering from it now herself. Then faintly but clearly came the answer: —

"'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.'"

"'Long past?' inquired the trembling Scrooge."

"'No, your past. Rise and come with me.'"

The lights went out, there was the sound of a great wind, then a wild cry which made the timid clutch one another's hands.

"'I am afraid! I am afraid! I shall fall.'"

The clear voice answered, "'Bear but a touch of my hand upon your heart, and you shall be upheld in more than this.'"

The curtain before the back of the stage was lifted, the light came on slowly. There, on the bench in an old-fashioned schoolroom, sat a small boy, tired, homesick, forlorn. To him entered a little girl, who threw her arms about his neck and told him that he was to come home. The little boy cried happily, and there was a strange echo from the front of the stage.

"'It is I!' cried Scrooge. 'I and my sister Fanny.'"

"'And here?' said the spirit."

The curtain fell and at once was lifted.

"'My old master Fezziwig!' laughed Scrooge."

The laugh died away at the next scene, when he saw once more the girl whom he had jilted because she was poor. A wild horror was in his voice.

"'Leave me, spirit! I cannot bear it!'"

The spirit in the white dress and with the streaming hair had already gone, and Scrooge felt his way across the room to bed.

When the curtain went up again, it was in a blaze of light. The bed-curtains were closely drawn, and sitting upon the green throne at the other end of the room was a little figure in a long green robe. Even now her schoolmates did not know her. She laughed merrily as she called to Scrooge, whose frightened face peered out from between the curtains. It brightened at sight of this cheerful ghost, but not for long. The Ghost of Christmas Present had sad sights to show.

The light faded, and though Christmas bells rang merrily, one could not hear them or enjoy them because of starved, wolfish children living in misery, and poor Cratchit and his family trying to make merry over their goose, while want stared them in the face. The audience sighed when the curtain fell once more and Scrooge wandered about his room alone.

By this time Miss Ellingwood had dropped her book and was devoting her whole atten-

tion to the tableaux. They were saddest of all now. Sarah was a tall figure without shape. Miss Ellingwood had contrived a support far above her head for the black robe. The stage was almost dark, and Scrooge had fallen upon his knees, as he watched the scenes of future Christmases.

Tiny Tim, the Cratchit cripple, had died from want of care, Scrooge himself lay in the churchyard, hideous Mrs. Dilber and her friends discussed his scant personal possessions, and the vast amount of his wealth went back into his business without ever having profited a human soul.

The audience caught the spirit of Scrooge's horror of himself, of his ecstatic joy at finding that he was still alive, and that there was time for him to redeem himself. They laughed and applauded, and there were those who cried. Then when the applause had died down, there was a loud call for the ghosts.

"It sounds like Edward," said Miss Ellingwood. "Run out and bow, Sarah."

Sarah clutched Miss Ellingwood's dress.

"*Ach*, I cannot!"

"Yes, dear, you must."

In a second she found herself in the middle of the stage. She saw the laughing, astonished faces, she saw Dr. Ellis applauding, she saw Professor Minturn smile, and back against the wall four tall boys, the real ghosts, who had come back at last. Near them, there stood some one else, a little taller than they, who waved his hand. It was William; he had come to take her home. Then her fright vanished. She was not Sarah any more. She was the Christmas Spirit, just as in the old days, when she played with the twins, she had been Jacob Kalb or Uncle Daniel or the Judge of the Orphans' Court by turns.

"Merry Christmas!" she cried, and then, like Tiny Tim, "'God bless us, every one!'"

Mr. Sattarlee was back of the scenes when she returned. He took both her hands in his. It was as though she had saved the

day for him, instead of for Miss Ellingwood.

"Everybody is coming over to my rooms to have something to eat, Sarah, and of course we want you."

Sarah smiled at him.

"I thank myself, *ach*, I mean I am much obliged. But my brother is here, and —"

"We will have him too. We could n't get along without either of you."

Ethel and Gertrude each held out a grateful hand. Even a tale-bearer must have her due.

"You saved the play, Miss Wenner."

Sarah's happy little smile died away.

"*Ach*, no, ma'am."

But she could not be long unhappy. Miss Ellingwood's hand would not let her go. When William came he only said, "Why, you little rascal!" which was praise enough. He talked and laughed with Miss Ellingwood and Mr. Sattarlee, and made friends with the boys, until he grew more wonderful

than ever in the eyes of his little sister. She sat on the sofa beside Miss Ellingwood, and Edward Ellis and the other ghosts told them how they had walked home, despairing of getting there in time, but determined to do their best.

Ethel and Gertrude glanced at them, and Ethel shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"How do you suppose she ever did it?" said Gertrude.

A mocking smile came into Ethel's blue eyes. It was well for Sarah that she did not hear; it would have grieved her heart almost as much as it hurt generous Ethel's to say a thing so mean.

"Is n't it her usual occupation to listen and tell?" asked Ethel.

CHAPTER VII

SARAH SAVES THE DAY ONCE MORE

The fall term of school is a time of adjustment, and the spring term flies so quickly that it is hardly begun before it is over. It is in winter that most real work is accomplished. Then, too, when the days are short, and life out of doors does not call so insistently, friendships quicken and school spirit grows.

Sarah felt very much better after her return from home. Laura had sternly forbidden her to do any heavier work than drying dishes, and looking after the twins and Albert, and she had told stories to her heart's content, and coasted and skated until she forgot that a grammar or a geography ever existed.

Now she worked diligently. It is safe to say that never had one small girl learned so much in so short a time. Professor Minturn was delighted with her progress; he regarded

his theory that the sub-Junior and the Junior History could be combined as already proved. The Geography professor cheered her enthusiastically on. He had meant to speak to Dr. Ellis about her transference from one class to the other, but he had forgotten it, and Sarah proceeded undisturbed. Mr. Sattarlee continued to have her read at sight for him in the evenings. He had begun to be really interested in seeing how much she could do.

Class rivalry always came to a head at the annual gymnasium exhibition, which took place just before the close of the winter term. There were performances by individuals, elaborate swinging of clubs and heavy work of various kinds, Gilbert dancing and intricate drills. The class which made the best record was given a silver cup.

Hitherto the cup had always been won by the Middle or the Senior class. Each year the enthusiastic Juniors made a frantic effort and failed. Occasionally they excelled in individual work, but the other classes had the

advantage of longer team-work in the drills. This year the Senior class was weak, and the Juniors would have had some hope, had it not been that the Middlers were exceptionally strong.

By this time the glow which followed the Christmas vacation was gone, and Sarah was once more a very tired girl. She had looked forward to the entertainment for weeks, but now that it was at hand, she wished with all her heart that she could go to bed instead of attending it.

The sub-Junior girls gave only an elementary wand-drill at the opening of the exhibition. The audience was still gathering; they formed merely the inconspicuous orchestra before the beginning of the real performance. When the drill was over, Sarah was glad to climb the steps to the running-track, and look down sleepily over the crowd in search of Miss Ellingwood.

The floor of the great gymnasium was divided into two parts. One was left bare for

the exhibition; the other was covered by a steep tier of seats occupied by the invited guests of the faculty and the faculty themselves. The students, when they were not at work, watched from the wide running-track which circled the gymnasium. Its railing was gayly decked with school and class banners, and it was crowded with close-packed groups of enthusiastic boys and girls. Far above in the dusk, showed dimly the great beams which upheld the vaulted roof.

Presently Sarah found Miss Ellingwood, sitting almost beneath her, with Mr. Sattarlee by her side. Then Sarah grew more and more sleepy. She heard the girls of her own class whispering round her. Mabel and Ellen were near by, but she did not turn her head, which rested comfortably against one of the upright supports of the great beam.

Below on the floor the girls of the Middle class were beginning an elaborate swinging of Indian clubs, moving in such perfect time with the music and with one another that

the difficult task seemed the easiest in the world. Already the girls of the Junior class, who were to follow, were quietly slipping down the stairs. Sarah saw them dimly, Ethel and Gertrude and all the others whom she so admired, and who paid no attention to her. The fact that she had saved their class play seemed to make them not more but even less friendly. The tears came into her eyes, and she brushed them angrily away. What a goose she was! She tightened her hold a little on the upright iron, and leaned her head against it once more. If she could only go over to the Main Building and go to bed!

Then suddenly she awoke. It seemed to her at first that she heard the cheering in her sleep; then it grew to a great roar all about her. The sub-Juniors beside her were cheering, the group of boys of the Middle class on the opposite side of the running-track were yelling madly, and "Bobs," Edward Ellis's collie, who would not be left at home, was barking as though he would

burst his throat. Sarah made out the Middle class yell: —

"Hip, hip, hooray,
Scarlet and gray,
We win the day!"

Then, looking up, she saw the cause of the excitement. Floating proudly from the great central beam, far above her head, was the scarlet and gray banner of the Middle class. The banner must have been rolled up and fastened there by some adventurous climber, and a cord by which it could be unfurled carried down along the supports to the opposite side of the running-track. It was no wonder that the Middlers had insisted upon having that particular spot. The cord had unfastened itself properly, and the great flag was left free to float back and forth in the slight breeze which came in round the many tall windows.

There was a wild yell from the Junior class, not of delight, but of disgust and dismay, and "Bobs" changed his bark to a

howl. The trick was a clever one, and it did not add to the comfort of the Juniors to realize that there was nothing to be done. The next number on the programme was a minuet by the Junior girls. They would have to give it, alas, under the colors of their rivals.

Edward Ellis and half a dozen others tried to push their way through the close-packed ranks of the Middlers, but Dr. Ellis saw them and motioned them back. Meanwhile the Middler girls went quietly on, not losing a beat of their time. When they finished, they marched out amid loud cheers and clapping of hands.

The sub-Juniors round Sarah were dancing up and down. Traditionally they were the friends of the Middle class, and the Middle class itself did not enjoy the sight of the great banner as much as they.

"Won't the Juniors be furious?" laughed Ellen Ritter. "I can just see Ethel Davis and Gertrude Manley when they behold it.

And they can't do a thing. Good for 'em!"

And the sub-Juniors moved a little farther down the running-track, crowding the Seniors behind them, so that they could see the faces of the Junior girls when they caught the first glimpse of the scarlet flag.

The same flame leaped suddenly in Sarah's heart that had flared before she pursued Jacob Kalb with a gun, and before she had poured the water out through the transom. But this time she deliberated and laid her plans more slowly. She owed the members of her own class no loyalty.

She looked up at the great beam far above her head. She tried to shake the iron upright upon which her hand rested and found it as firm as the boards beneath her feet; then she stared up again at the beam and down at the floor far below, and her eyes brightened.

There was a Junior flag just under her

hand. The Junior class would enter in the dark, the lights were to be entirely extinguished, so that they could slip to their places without being seen, and then the light would come, not from the electric globes, but from a stereopticon lantern at the end of the room, which would throw colored lights upon the performers. Sarah knew all the arrangements. Already the gymnasium director had risen to announce that the lights would be turned out, and that no one should be alarmed.

Sarah glanced about once more. It was fortunate that she was just above the entrance to the dressing-room, and in the most undesirable place on the track. There was no one within ten feet. She put her hand on the belt of her gymnasium suit to be sure that the buttons were all tight and that nothing should hamper her, and then she thought of the tall hickory tree at home, up which she had scrambled ever since she could remember, and smiled.

The row of lights above the running-track faded and went out, and she put her arms round the slender iron pole. Then those below were darkened, and with a spring her rubber-soled feet were on the railing. When she felt the great beam, she had one moment of awful fright. What if they should suddenly turn on the lights and she be discovered hanging in mid-air? She would not be able to keep her hold. There would be one agonized moment, then she would drop down, down to the floor beneath.

But the fright did not make her stop. It vanished completely when she felt under her hands the cord which fastened the flag.

She did not attempt to untie it, there was no time for that. There were two pins on the front of her blouse, which had fastened on the sub-Junior badge which she had worn during her own drill. Wrapping the Middler flag round the beam, so that it was completely hidden, she pinned the Junior flag to its edge, and then crept slowly back. She

could see far below her the line of dim white figures crossing the gymnasium. In another instant they would be in their places, and then the lights would flare out.

Thankfully she felt the iron pole beneath her feet, and in wild panic slid down, the iron burning her hands like steam. Then she stood holding desperately to it, panting.

It was the man who managed the stereopticon who revealed the new banner. The Junior girls in their white dresses wove back and forth in intricate figures, now in the gleam of violet, now in the glow of rose-color. Now they spread out from one end of the wide floor to the other, now they were close together. Presently there was a glow of yellow light which illuminated the whole gymnasium and rested especially upon the high beam. The stereopticon man had no sympathy with any particular class. He realized that the scarlet and gray flag was an object of interest, so he trained his light

upon it. Every eye in the gymnasium was lifted at once.

Bedlam broke loose, after an instant's pause, during which faculty and students and guests stared open-mouthed. Where was the Middler banner? Who had dared to climb out there and remove it? And who had hung the Junior banner there?

"Light blue and white,
We 're all right!"

roared the Junior boys.

"Wow, wow, wo-o-ow," howled "Bobs."

"Bang, bang, bang," played the pianist, in a noble effort to be heard above the din. Only the Junior girls seemed undisturbed. They wove more intricate evolutions, deaf to the piano as they were; their powdered heads bowed to one another, their motion seemed to grow more light and fairy-like. Presently one of them glanced upward, then another, and some one smiled faintly, and without another sign, they went on with more spirit than ever.

A Middler started at once to climb the pole, but was ordered back. Then another tried it, and was sternly reproved. The flag must hang there now, there would be no more seasons of convenient darkness in which it might be torn down. The Junior girls marched out, Ethel Davis and Gertrude Manley leading, as they led most affairs in their class.

Now it was the turn of the Middler boys to take a taste of their own medicine, and give their drill under a rival banner. They gritted their teeth angrily. The displacement of their flag disturbed them sorely. The cup was theirs already, they were sure of that, but the celebration with which they meant to mark their victory was spoiled.

Anger may be a spur in a long jump or in putting the shot, but it does not conduce to good team-work. One of the Middlers lifted his clubs too swiftly, another too slowly, and they did not begin in good form. And then there was the click of club

against club, an evidence of carelessness of which not even the sub-Juniors would be guilty.

A giggle spread along the line of the Juniors. The audience heard and the Middlers themselves heard, and their faces grew hot and their hands unsteady. There was a bang, a crash, and an Indian club flew in a wide curve, and sailed through the glass door which opened into the director's office. It was an unpardonable crime.

"Attention!" cried the director. "Clubs at rest, right face, march."

For the first time in the history of the school a Middle class had failed, and the Juniors had won the cup.

Sarah had slipped to the rear of the group of her classmates. She was desperately tired, and her hands burned like fire. If she could only go to bed! But no one was expected to leave until the end. It seemed to her that minutes lengthened into hours and still the entertainment dragged on.

All round her she heard excited inquiry. What Junior had crept out on the beam? Was it Edward Ellis?

"You did n't see a Junior go up this side, did you, Sarah?" asked Mabel Thorn; and Sarah answered with a truthful and weary "No."

She had sat down on the edge of a spring-board, she did not hear even the loud cheering which followed the handing of the cup to the Junior president. There was a rush for the stairs, and she was carried on unresisting. Then she slipped aside and opened the door leading to the lower floor. From there a narrow passageway ran between the swimming-pool and the girls' dressing-room and thence led out of doors. The main exit was jammed with arguing, cheering students; she could not go out that way.

As she passed the door of the girls' dressing-room, she heard the same excited questions shouted back and forth. Ethel and Gertrude were laughing and talking as they

struggled out of their long cheese-cloth dresses. Suddenly one of them called to her: —

"Who are you, out there? Suppose you come in and untangle me!"

Sarah knew well enough that if they had known it was she they would not have called her. Nevertheless, she went in and asked what she could do.

"Oh," said Gertrude, "is it you, Miss Wenner? Please unpin this down the back."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Sarah.

She could scarcely open her hand; it felt as though there were not a fragment of skin left on the palm, but she struggled bravely with the stubborn pins. It seemed to her a long time until she was able to extract the first one.

"There is one out already," she said faintly.

Ethel turned to look at her and then came a little closer.

"What's the matter? Look at me, child!"

The word slipped out involuntarily, and she corrected herself at once. "Miss Wenner, what is the matter? Let me see your hand." And Ethel seized it and pointed to the white dress. There was a slow-spreading, scarlet stain on it.

"No," cried Sarah. "Leave me go. It is nothing. I — I just skinned myself a little. I — "

Ethel firmly opened her fingers. Then Gertrude looked at her other hand. It too was bleeding.

Sarah tried to pull her hands away.

"*Ach*, it is nothing. Leave me be!"

"It looks to me — " began Ethel slowly.

"As though you had been sliding down the pole in the gym," finished Gertrude.

"I skinned my hand there once before I learned how," said Ethel. "But the gym has n't been open for practice to-day, and this has just been done. How did you do it?"

Sarah had lost all power to struggle.

"*Ach*, it is nothing!"

Gertrude gasped.

"Did you climb up that pole and put our flag on the beam?"

"Answer her, please," commanded Ethel.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Why?"

"Because — because — *Ach*, leave me go!"

The great low-ceiled locker-room was growing dim. Sarah tried to jerk away. This time it was not embarrassment but terror which gave her strength.

"You have n't any business to talk to me like this. I did it because I did n't want to see you drill under that other flag. I hate that other flag. And I hate —" Sarah took a deep breath. Her heart felt like a hard lump in her breast. There was a red flaming light before her eyes, — "I hate *you!*"

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESULT OF PROFESSOR MINTURN'S EXPERIMENT

It was a long time before either Ethel or Gertrude answered. They had not been more surprised at sight of the Junior banner above their heads. They were both accustomed to being liked, not hated.

"What makes you say that?" asked Ethel.

Her cheeks were hot. Sarah's climbing to the roof of the gymnasium was not in accord with the character which she bore in the school. Certainly that was not the way to please teachers, or to win their favor for herself.

Sarah's voice shook. She did not feel the pain in her hands. The lights had gone out, and they seemed to be alone in the locker-room.

"Because I meant it." Then good English flew to the winds. "You are all the time cross over me. You are too high up. I am dumb and I can't always talk right, and I come from Spring Grove post-office, but I don't do *you* anything. I never did you anything. I —"

There was the spurt of a match, and Gertrude lit the gas. Then she laid her hands on Sarah's shoulders and turned her to the light. Her voice trembled also.

"Look here. You've been frank, and I shall, too. Did you ever report your roommates for making a noise?"

"No." The answer was explosive.

"Do you tell Miss Ellingwood everything that you can find out?"

Sarah laughed hysterically. "I don't find out anything to tell her. How should I?"

"Did you never tell her about your roommates?"

"I never say nothing from them at all to nobody. I leave them alone. But they won't

leave me alone. They made me throw water on Miss Ellingwood, they made me —" She looked about so wildly that the girls were frightened.

Gertrude put a steadying arm round her.

"You were right. We have been mean."

Sarah looked at her piteously. "*Ach*, I— I should n't have talked so. I —"

Ethel looked gravely into Gertrude's eyes.

"Yes, you should," she said to Sarah. "Now, come over to our room and I'll tie up your hands for you. You must n't tell anybody that it was you that slid down the pole."

"No, ma'am. I wish I could go in my bed. If I don't go in my bed, I won't know my lessons for to-morrow."

"You shall go to bed."

But Miss Ellingwood's room was crowded with guests, and there was the sound of many voices in Sarah's.

"It is no place I can sleep," she cried.

The pain in her hands had come back, and

made her feel faint. It seemed to her that she should die if she could not sleep.

"Yes, there is," said Ethel and Gertrude together.

And so with peaceful heart and bandaged hands, Sarah slept in Ethel's bed, while Ethel and Gertrude whispered together across the room.

"It was in the air," said Ethel. "Everybody distrusted her."

Gertrude sat up in bed. "I think we've been hateful, *hateful*," she said. "Listen!"

"Some people always talk in their sleep," answered Ethel. "I guess she's tired, poor child. I'm not sleepy, are you?"

"No," said Gertrude, "I'm ashamed. Are you?"

Following the gymnasium entertainment came a few days of examinations, then a day of hurried packing, before the scattering of five hundred boys and girls to their homes for a week. Sarah was to go home; she had been thinking for a long time of the snow-

drops which would be in bloom on the south side of the house, and the daffodils which must be poking up through the earth. But now at the last moment, she did not seem to care. If they would only let her go to bed and sleep and sleep! She feared that some day she might drop over asleep where she stood, and frighten Miss Ellingwood and Ethel and Gertrude. How absurd it would be to fall asleep in the middle of the day! Mabel Thorn and Ellen Ritter often took naps after dinner, but Sarah had not slept in the daytime since she was a baby.

If she had been a little older or a little less forgiving, she might have been slower to accept the friendship of Ethel and Gertrude, offered at once in many penitent and friendly ways. But almost immediately the hardness went out of her heart and the tremor from her voice when she saw them or spoke to them. Finally she felt the same soft, happy thrill of relief that she had felt

when Aunt 'Liza appeared with her gift of cake and *schnitz*.

"Nobody is cross over me, and I am not cross over anybody," she said to herself.

And in a day or two she did tumble over as she had feared. Ethel and Gertrude were waiting for her on the steps. She was going with them to the shop to order viands for a feast to be held in their room that evening. Miss Ellingwood had gone walking, and Sarah grew heated and impatient over the fastening of her sailor suit, and the tying of her red scarf.

She did not wait for the elevator, but ran downstairs, jumping over the last step of each flight, and then going more sedately out past the office door. She remembered afterwards that she had felt a little dizzy, and that she had once put out her hand to steady herself. She saw Professor Minturn coming toward her on his way to the faculty meeting in the office, and she tried to straighten up and bow to him. Instead, she pitched forward at his feet.

In one step, Professor Minturn was beside her. He expected to see her scramble up, red-faced and embarrassed.

"Oh, I hope you haven't hurt yourself!" he began to say.

But Sarah did not move.

"Miss Wenner!" he said, in a tone which brought Dr. Ellis and the Secretary and Eugene hurrying from the office. By that time, he had lifted her from the floor.

"She seems to have fainted," he said.

Dr. Ellis swept a pile of catalogues from the office-sofa.

"Lay her down there, Minturn. Eugene, get some water."

The color was coming back faintly to Sarah's cheeks when Miss Ellingwood walked in. Then it vanished once more, and she lay limp and deadly white.

"Telephone for Dr. Brownlee," commanded Dr. Ellis. "Ah, there, she's opening her eyes. Look here, Sarah!"

Sarah smiled faintly.

"I feel so — so — queer," she whispered. "I would like to go in my bed."

"You shall," Dr. Ellis assured her. "Eugene, do you think you can carry her upstairs?"

Professor Minturn held out his arms. He was frowning; he felt suddenly a great anxiety and uneasiness. But he was sure that he had asked the child whether she was well; he could not have been so careless as to give her extra work without ascertaining that. She had always looked strong. He could not believe that this pale child could be that same rosy-cheeked little girl who had worked with such spirit.

"Let me take her upstairs," he said nervously.

By the time he returned, Dr. Brownlee was coming in at the front door.

"You'll come down and tell us at once how she is and what is the matter, doctor?" he said. "She 's a favorite pupil of mine."

Then he went in and took his seat by the

SHE SEEMS TO HAVE FAINTED

window in the faculty room, among his colleagues who were waiting for him, and the meeting was called to order.

Dr. Brownlee tapped at the door before the business was fairly begun.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I thought I could get back before your meeting was in session."

"Come in," invited Dr. Ellis. "How is your patient? What is the trouble?"

Dr. Brownlee's answer was prompt and to the point.

"Overstudy."

"Impossible!" answered Dr. Ellis just as promptly. "She is a sub-Junior, and the sub-Junior branches are not hard, and she is a bright girl and was well prepared."

Dr. Brownlee did not like to be contradicted.

"She's been talking incoherently about extra history and extra geography and extra something else. I don't remember what the other is. She doesn't look like a girl who

should have any extras of any kind. At least not now. I don't know what she looked like when she came here."

"She looked like a strong, healthy country girl. She was slender, but she looked well. She has had regular exercise in the gymnasium, and she has n't had any extra work to do, I am positive."

Professor Minturn rose suddenly.

"I have always had a theory that the sub-Junior and the Junior History could be advantageously combined. I thought Miss Wenner was a good subject upon whom to try it. I see now that I was wrong." And he sat down and stared out the window.

The teacher of Geography got more slowly to his feet.

"I meant to report to you, Dr. Ellis, but I forgot it, that Miss Wenner had been taking the Junior Geography. She was considerably ahead of the sub-Junior class, and so I allowed her to begin the Physical Geography, and perhaps she has been going a — a

little faster than the — the rest of the class. She was so enthusiastic, it was a pleasure to teach her. I — I have never had a pupil like her."

Dr. Ellis smiled queerly.

"Are there any more confessions to be made?"

Young Mr. Sattarlee rose from his place at the back of the room. He did not look at Dr. Ellis, or at any of his colleagues, but stared straight over their heads. There was no one in the room who did not know of his devotion to Miss Ellingwood, and Sarah's constant association with her.

"She has been reading a little Latin at sight for me," he said. "She did it very well."

"She seems to have done very well for all of you," said Dr. Ellis grimly. "I wish that I could feel that we had done as well by her."

Dr. Brownlee stood motionless at the door. He was polite enough not to say, "I told

you so," though restraining himself must have cost considerable effort.

"Put her to bed at once over in the Infirmary where it 's quiet," he commanded. "I'll see the nurse. And keep her there for two weeks. Then, if she goes slowly for the rest of the year, doing only her own regular work, and that as easily as possible, she 'll get through without any injury to herself. Don't let her go home for the vacation. She is n't fit for the journey or the excitement of seeing people. I 'll be down to-morrow morning again. Good-by."

At first Sarah lay very still and stared at the infirmary ceiling. She did not remember being carried thither, and it seemed to her that she spent days in trying to realize where she was. She remembered afterwards that she was constantly disturbed by a person in a white dress who insisted that she must eat and drink when she did not wish to eat and drink.

"It is very good," the person in white

would say coaxingly, and Sarah would rejoin politely but a little wearily, —

"Is it so? Then won't you please eat it? I don't want to eat."

But all her protestations made no difference; the hot broth or cold milk was poured down her throat.

Once a tall man spent several hours by her bed, and fed her and held her hand and was very strong and comforting. After he had gone she said to the nurse, as though she had made a great discovery, "Why, that was William!" and the nurse laughed and said, "Yes."

Slowly she began to distinguish other faces, those of three repentant professors, who brought her flowers and sent her fruit and squab, and Miss Ellingwood, equally repentant and even more attentive, who made Sarah proud by whispering to her that she was going to marry Mr. Sattarlee, and that no one but Sarah was to know it until school was over.

Presently Ethel and Gertrude came, one at a time, and one day, after she was sitting up, Edward Ellis, with his mother and an armful of flowers.

"I never knew that being sick was like this!" she said to her nurse.

"It is n't for everybody," answered the nurse, smiling.

At the end of two weeks she was allowed to get up, and even to study a little. Every one was anxious to help her. Eugene sprang to take her up in the elevator, even though it was not elevator hours, and Mabel and Ellen said awkwardly that if she would come back and sleep in her own room they would be very quiet. Fortunately, they made the offer before Miss Ellingwood, who said at once that she could not spare Sarah. It was amazing how the sentiment of the school had changed during her illness.

Dr. Ellis stopped her and spoke to her whenever he met her in the hall, and one day he asked her to come into his office.

"Sarah," he said, "I had a talk with your brother about you, and what he told me made me very proud to have you here, and more sorry than ever that between us we should have let you get sick. Now every Monday morning I want you to come in and report to me how you feel. No, we 'd better make it Friday evening. One is most apt to be tired on Friday evening. And Sarah,"—he smiled at the sudden flush of frightened color,—"you won't climb any more gymnasium beams, will you?"

Sarah clasped her hands.

"*Ach*, no! I—I was up before I thought. That is the trouble with me. I do things before I think always. I—I promise."

She went out of the office with her old swift step. She felt almost entirely well physically. Mentally, she seemed a stranger to herself. Her illness, her watching Miss Ellingwood's happiness, her association with the older girls, made her feel grown up. She

was homesick for the twins and Albert and the farm and her old, childish self.

The solicitude of the professors was amusing to see.

"You have been over the year's work," Professor Minturn reminded her. "Now you will have to do only a little reviewing, just a little each day, Sarah." It was strange how to faculty and girls alike she had become Sarah instead of Miss Wenner. "You need n't come to class regularly. You can spend that time in study, and I will give you a shorter recitation by yourself."

"*Ach*, no, I thank you!" cried Sarah. It was only under special stress of surprise or gratitude that she said *ach* now. "I will come to class, thank you."

The Geography teacher said that he would go over all the Political Geography with her, and Mr. Sattarlee did not say a word to Miss Ellingwood in the evenings until he had heard Sarah's Latin lesson for the next day. It must have been a good deal of a sacrifice,

for they had many things to say to each other.

And day by day the spring passed. The maples on the campus budded and burst into full leaf, the oaks and hickories followed more slowly. The air was full of the song of birds and the scent of flowers, and slowly the ruddy color came back to Sarah's cheeks to stay.

But she was strangely nervous. Each hour that brought home and summer nearer brought also the dreaded ordeal of State Board examinations a little closer. One might study faithfully through the year, and pass the faculty examinations brilliantly, and one's efforts count for nothing unless the state also put its seal upon the results. And Sarah became each day more certain that she should not pass.

"It 's exactly like a funeral," wailed Ethel Davis. "They come on Wednesday night, seven of them, county superintendents and Normal School principals, and the next

morning they begin to examine us, and in the afternoon they examine us again, and then they give us ice-cream for supper when nobody has any appetite for ice-cream, and in the evening sometimes there are left-over examinations, and then we spend the whole night worrying for fear we have n't passed, and they spend the whole of the next day correcting papers, — I 'm always glad when it 's sweltering hot! — and then they insult us by giving us more ice-cream for supper, and then we go into the chapel to hear whether we have passed."

"I won't pass," said Sarah in despair. "I can't pass."

Ethel laughed.

"Nonsense! Of course you 'll pass, child. Why, you have only Spelling and Political Geography and Arithmetic and Physiology to pass. And you always know your Spelling, and you 're ahead in Geography. You are a little gosling. Now suppose you had six branches, Latin and History and Physi-

cal Geography and Grammar and Drawing and Civil Government. What would you do then, young lady?"

"I should die," said Sarah solemnly.

"But you'll have them next year."

"No," answered Sarah. "I do not believe I will be here next year. The twins must soon have their chance. I cannot take two years to one class. And if they did let me come back, I would be taking Arithmetic and Spelling and Geography and Physiology over again, and you and Gertrude would be two classes ahead of me. That is the way it would be."

Ethel looked at her sharply.

"You come out for a walk," she said cheerfully; and she took Sarah's books almost by force. She and Gertrude had had a talk with Dr. Ellis, and no dragons could have insisted more firmly than they upon the carrying out of both the letter and the spirit of Dr. Brownlee's directions.

CHAPTER IX

THE STATE BOARD

THERE was a tradition that the day of the State Board examinations was always fair. This year it was not to be belied. Sarah, who had been awake since before daylight, watched the sun rise, clear and bright, as she dressed. Miss Ellingwood slept peacefully in her room next door, and the morning sweeping and dusting in the halls had not yet begun when Sarah sat down on the window-seat with a pile of books before her. There were a dozen things at which she wished to take a final look. Even her confidence in the Wenner ability to spell had vanished under the strain of the last months, and she meant to glance rapidly through at least half the book. The thought of Arithmetic plunged her into despair; there was no use in trying to review that. But she

could take a final look at the Geography and the Physiology.

Then, strange to say, she did nothing but sit still and look out over the dewy campus until it was time to go to breakfast.

"How do you feel?" asked Miss Ellingwood.

"Scared," answered Sarah, trying to smile.

The members of the Board breakfasted at the Secretary's table, which was next to Miss Ellingwood's. Sarah, who could not keep her eyes away from them, felt that there was a terrible menace in the way they laughed and joked with one another. Only exceedingly hard-hearted persons could laugh that way just before they assisted in such an inquisition as their examinations were said to be. There was one tall, brown-bearded man at the head of the table, who looked about smilingly at the whole dining-room; he doubtless imposed the most difficult questions of all He made Sarah tremble.

If only the day were over and she knew

finally and certainly that she had not passed! They would be glad to see her at home, whether she succeeded or failed; and she could hide her stupid head at the farm, and the twins could have her chance. She tried not to think of how wretched she would be if she could never come back. She would never see Ethel and Gertrude again, she would never be able to think of the school with pleasure. She remembered often that Laura had said that coming back to school was like coming back home. And Laura did not have as many ties as Sarah had and would have. Both William and Laura had graduated there, and eventually the twins and Albert would come too. Was she to disgrace them all?

Suddenly her sad meditations were interrupted by Miss Ellingwood.

"You must eat, Sarah. Finish your coffee at least. See, they don't look so awesome, do they?"

The brown-bearded Chairman heard, and

turned to Miss Ellingwood and laughed, and then went on to speak in a round, friendly voice. He had a strangely familiar accent. He spoke a little as Sarah's father had spoken, and as Henry Ebert and Uncle Daniel and the other Pennsylvania Germans spoke. Sarah thought that he might have come from Spring Grove itself, and was not far wrong, for he had learned his Pennsylvania-German accent in another little town when he was a boy, and would never lose it. He had evidently, also, the Pennsylvania-German fondness for a joke.

"Is she afraid we 'll eat her up, Miss Ellingwood?" he asked; at which a good deal of Sarah's fright evaporated.

The chapel exercises were more solemn than usual. It was a little like a service before going into battle. At the door, Sarah found Dr. Brownlee waiting to talk to her. He felt her pulse, and laughed at her frightened "Did you ever have to take such examinations?" and told her that if she did n't

pass, he 'd give her still more bitter medicine. Sarah almost skipped as she ran along the board-walk to the recitation building.

The seats, which were assigned in the largest class-rooms, were not given according to classes. Sarah was in the back of the great Drawing-room, a Junior boy beside her, a Senior in front of her. Clutched in her hot hand was her fountain-pen, a blotter, three newly sharpened pencils, and two erasers. If Sarah failed, it was not to be for lack of tools. Even Edward Ellis, who sat next her, was subdued, and gave her only a faint smile as she arranged them on her desk.

In the front of the great room, Dr. Ellis talked to the Board of Examiners. This was the main examination room; from here all the papers were given out, and thither they were brought when collected. Sarah watched the men absently, half of her mind trying to bound China, when suddenly they all turned and looked in her direction, and the man with the brown beard smiled. Sarah was ter

ror-stricken. Was the principal telling them that she would not pass? Perhaps he would come to her and say that it was hardly worth while for her to try. Sarah did not blame her teachers for her breaking down; in her opinion it was her own natural "dumbness."

But the examiner who distributed the papers had already left one on her desk, and she seized it, and gazed at the printed questions. At first they looked entirely unfamiliar. The two battles of Saratoga? Was it part of Geography or Physiology? It was certainly neither Spelling nor Arithmetic. She frowned and the questions seemed to vanish, and a blank page to stare her in the face.

Then, suddenly, she remembered. The battles of Saratoga took place on September 19 and October 7, 1777. But it was a History question, and in History one was not examined until the end of one's Junior year. History was one of Ethel's and Gertrude's subjects. But Sarah was not there to reason, but to obey. She remembered her extra les-

sons, took courage, and read another question: "Mention four causes of the Civil War." That was easy! And there were only five questions in all.

Presently, when she had answered three, she ventured to lift her head. Another paper had been laid on her desk. A new examiner had just passed, his head turned toward the other side of the room, as he answered a question from one of the Seniors. This was a double paper: there were four questions in each of two branches, Arithmetic and Physiology. To Sarah's great joy, these seemed even less difficult. She finished the first paper and attacked the second. Before she had quite finished, the first examiner came to collect, and with a long sigh she passed in all the papers. She saw Mabel Thorn and Ellen Ritter get up and go out, and with them other sub-Juniors, but she did not stir. She would wait until she was told to go. If perseverance would help her through, that should not be lacking.

The distributor of papers looked at her a little sharply as he went by.

"Physical Geography?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Sarah indistinctly. She was beginning to be confused. She could not remember whether she was to be examined in Physical Geography or not, but at least she would try. There were questions in Latin on the same paper, and a half page of translation. The translation was easy. She remembered having read the little story with Mr. Sattarlee. But she could not understand why they should give her a Latin paper. When one was given extra studies by mistake, did one have to take examinations in them?

She was afraid to ask questions. Mabel Thorn had asked whether she must answer all the questions in order to pass, and the examiner had not answered her very pleasantly. Evidently they did not like to be questioned. Sarah was too excited to distinguish between necessary and unnecessary

questions. Bewildered, she set to work once more.

The day was as hot as a June day can be. Not a breath of air stirred the shades at the windows, which did not seem to keep out a bit of the hot sunshine. The examiners had large palm-leaf fans, which they waved tantalizingly back and forth. Occasionally a student stopped writing long enough to fan himself with his examination-paper or to mop his brow. Not so Sarah. Her hand seemed to stick to the paper, the perspiration ran down her cheeks, but she did not stop.

Once "Bobs" Ellis furnished a slight diversion. He wandered in in search of Edward, and having found him walked lazily to the front of the room, and sat down, panting, to stare at the examiners. For a few minutes he contemplated them gravely, then he opened his mouth in a tremendous yawn and stalked out. Every one but Sarah laughed and felt better.

At noon Miss Ellingwood tried to coax Sarah to eat.

"Were they hard, Sarah?"

"I—I guess so."

"You must lie down for a while after dinner," said Miss Ellingwood solicitously. "And you must n't say a word or think about examinations."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Sarah obediently. She had meant to ask Miss Ellingwood to help her to fathom the mystery of the morning's examinations, but if Miss Ellingwood did not wish to talk about examinations, she would not insist. But she did not lie down. She hunted up her spelling-book and glanced once more at "phthisis" and "relieve" and "receive," and all the words which bothered her.

It was the middle of the afternoon before she realized that she had written the answers to seven sets of questions.

Several of the grammar questions had baffled her completely, and when an examiner had laid on her desk a sheet of drawing-paper, and had intimated that she was to draw the

fern which was placed near her on a table, she had lifted her hand to protest. But no one seemed to see her hand, and she lowered it again and set desperately to work.

Edward Ellis, next to her, was also drawing the fern, and he looked at her wonderingly. Then he remembered that she had been taking some Junior courses. It was that which had made her ill. Perhaps they were going to let her try the Junior examinations. And at any rate the Board knew what it was about. Edward stood in great awe of that august body, and did not dare to offer any objections to its proceedings.

Sarah was told also to draw the steps leading to the platform, and she proceeded to obey. She had had only elementary drawing. She saw with alarm that the boys near her were working with careful measurements and ruling. She knew nothing about ruling, or about holding up one's pencil and squinting past it, or the rules of perspective by which they worked so carefully. She only

drew the steps as she had drawn things for the twins, as they looked to her.

"Political Geography and Arithmetic and Physiology and Spelling I was to be examined in," she said to herself. "I have been examined in Arithmetic and Physiology and History and Latin and Physical Geography and Grammar and Drawing, but not yet in Spelling or Political Geography. Most of these things do not come till next year. *Ach*, I do not know what it means!"

The examiner had collected the papers once more, and laid a new one on her desk. Sarah glanced at it, then finally she raised her voice in protest.

"I don't take Civil Government," she said. "I never took it. I don't know anything about it. If I knew anything about it, I—"

"What class are you?" asked the examiner shortly.

"The sub-Junior."

"Then you don't belong here." He spoke

impatiently. He remembered that the papers which she had handed in in the morning were the most voluminous in the class. Lengthy papers do not please gentlemen who have hundreds to examine. "You belong over in the other room, where the sub-Juniors are being examined in Spelling. You 'll have to hurry. People that are late are sometimes refused admission."

Sarah gathered pencils and erasers and fountain-pen, and flew across the hall. The examiner there received her even less cheerfully.

"You are very late," he said sharply. "Spell 'picnicking.'"

He was somewhat mollified by her prompt answer. Ten sub-Juniors had misspelled the word.

Sarah breathed a long sigh and found a seat. Her mind was suddenly clear; she felt that she could not fail even if he gave her all the hard words in the book. Here her foot was on its native heath. William would

be able to forgive her for knowing nothing about Latin, but no Wenner would ever be able to forgive her for being a poor speller.

Long after the examiner had marked them, he continued to amuse himself by giving them all the "catchy," treacherous words he could think of. He coupled words on purpose to snare them, "four" and "forty," "precede" and "proceed," "defendant" and "precedent." He gave them all the short, trying words, like "fiery," which half the class spelled "f-i-r-e-y," and all the long words, which one does not expect to meet with outside the spelling-book, like "eleemosynary" and "monocotyledon" and "asseveration." When he finished, both he and the students were out of breath. Of all the class only Sarah had not missed a word.

"Are you the young lady who missed time by being sick?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Umph!" said the examiner non-committally.

Ethel and Gertrude waited for Sarah outside the door, and walked across the campus with her. As in a dream she heard them discussing their questions.

"The two battles of Saratoga were on September 19 and October 7, 1777," said Gertrude. "Gates was in command of the Americans and Burgoyne of the British."

"Yes," answered Ethel. "And the Treaty of Ghent was the one which ended the War of 1812, was n't it?"

"Were those *your* questions?" asked Sarah wearily.

"Yes, what were yours like?"

"*Ach*, I don't know. 'I want,'" — she laughingly quoted a jingle which Miss Ellingwood often repeated, —

> "'I want to have my supper,
> And I want to go to bed,'

and then I want to sleep and sleep and sleep, and then I will not know for a long time that I am put out of the Normal School."

CHAPTER X

THE CHAIRMAN MAKES A SPEECH

The wild uproar of the gymnasium entertainment did not compare in intensity with the suppressed excitement of the day following examinations. There were no school-exercises except a chapel-service in the morning, which the students wished might be longer, since it was all they had to occupy them during the long and tedious day. The girls wandered about from room to room, the Seniors, who were to have a vacation of a week before Commencement, packing their trunks half-heartedly, the others doing nothing. It did not seem worth while to begin anything until one knew whether one was to return.

The Board was closeted down in the principal's office, where they worked from breakfast till dark. Sometimes a student, passing

through the hall when the door was opened, saw them laboring at long tables, each with a great pile of papers before him and a pitcher of water hard by. If the student had hoped for hot weather so that the Board might be uncomfortable, he prayed now much more fervently that their tempers might not be influenced by the heat.

"They say the marks go down five points whenever the thermometer goes up one," laughed Edward Ellis.

Sarah slept until long after breakfast-time. When she woke Miss Ellingwood was writing at her desk.

"Am I put out?" asked Sarah faintly.

"Not yet," answered Miss Ellingwood. "Here is some breakfast for you."

Once in the history of the school, the Board had finished its work before supper, and the students who were wandering about the fields back of the campus out of hearing of the bell had to get their reports from Dr. Ellis himself, — a sad duty for those who

had failed. Since then no one ever wandered away in the afternoon, for fear that the ominous bell might ring and he not be there to hear. Usually it did not ring till eight o'clock, and sometimes it was ten. By that time hopes had often sunk very low, and there were strange rumors flying about.

"They say that ten Seniors have failed, and half the Junior class," some one would announce. "They 're debating about them now. Dr. Ellis thinks that some of them can be changed."

The Secretary always shook his head gloomily when applied to.

"I never knew such a year," was his invariable response; and it never occurred to any one to suppose that he meant a good year.

As usual there was ice-cream for supper. Gertrude Manley pretended to wave it aside

"At dinner I might have been able to eat a few mouthfuls," she groaned. "But now! No, thank you!"

It was with a great sigh of relief that Sarah watched her take a second helping. Perhaps they were not as despairing as they seemed. It would be bad enough if she should not pass, but it would be much worse if Ethel and Gertrude should fail.

Sarah spent the hours after supper wandering up and down the hall which led to the chapel. She did not expect to pass; the calmer thought of to-day had convinced her that she had been the victim of some strange mistake in the giving out of the papers. It was altogether her own fault. She should have told them that she was not a Junior.

In spite of her certainty, however, she was wildly excited. No one could have been in the school for a minute and have remained calm. Miss Ellingwood was excited, and Dr. Ellis and Eugene, who, when he passed an anxious boy in the hall, drew his finger across his throat to signify the operation in which the State Board was engaged.

Presently Ethel and Gertrude came down the hall.

"We were looking for you, Sarah."

"I don't believe it will ever ring," cried Sarah.

"Hark!" said Ethel.

They heard the first faint ring of the gong on the boys' side of the building, then the bell rang sharply above their heads.

"Our fate is sealed!" cried Gertrude. "We are doomed. Come on to the slaughter!"

She seized Ethel by one hand and Sarah by the other, and they were the first to reach the chapel-stairs. Behind them doors were opening, and there was the sound of hurrying steps and excited voices.

"Let us sit here on the last row," suggested Sarah.

"So that we can be more easily borne hence," laughed Gertrude.

The State Board was already seated on the platform. They were all talking and

laughing as heartily as they had the day before. The Chairman carried a paper in his hand. He made some joke about it, and his colleagues all laughed ; then he laid it down on a long box on the table by his side.

"The names are on that paper," whispered Ethel.

"Yours is," answered Sarah, "but mine is n't. I know that much."

Mercifully Sarah was not kept long in suspense. The students had never gathered so quickly. The doors were closed, and then Dr. Ellis announced that the Chairman would read the names of those who had passed.

The brown-bearded Chairman rose slowly, still laughing with the man next to him. Then he looked out solemnly over the audience and the audience looked back solemnly at him. He lifted the paper from the table, looked at it solemnly too, and then laid it back.

"Nobody passed, perhaps," whispered Sarah.

The Chairman had begun to speak.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he said. "I am not going to hurt you." At which there was a great laugh, and then a settling back into easier positions. "You all look so frightened and so sure that you have failed, that you make us feel that our judgment is at fault and that we have made a mistake to let any of you through. There, that 's better! Once, a good many years ago, when I was a little boy —" He stopped and looked at them comically over his glasses — "Which would you rather have first, the story about the time when I was a little boy, or the names? All in favor of the names say '*Ay*.'"

The response left no room for doubt upon that question.

"Well, then. We'll take the sub-Juniors first. Those who have passed are —" The falling of the proverbial pin would have made a loud noise in the silence which ensued. Sarah felt a frightened thrill run up and down her back. Suppose she *should* pass! How glori-

ous it would be! Then William and Laura would feel that their faith in her had been warranted, that their sacrifice was not in vain. It would encourage the twins to study, it would astonish the neighbors. Sarah leaned forward, one hand tight in Ethel's, one in Gertrude's. Suppose she should pass!

It seemed to her hours before she leaned limply back. Her name was not on the list. She had been mad to expect it. Mabel Thorn's was there and Ellen Ritter's; she had thought they were stupid and lazy, yet they had passed. The girl who had packed her ink-bottle in her trunk had passed. Even she could answer State Board questions. Any of these would have had sense enough to object if they had been given Junior papers instead of some of their own.

She felt her companions' hands tighten sympathetically on her own, and she struggled bravely to keep back the tears. She would not cry. Not even if they expelled her would she cry.

The cheerful voice went on reading. Ethel and Gertrude had passed; they let go of Sarah's hands for an instant to clasp each other's, and smiled at each other above her head, while she looked at them sadly. They were Middlers now, and in another year they would be Seniors with all the Senior privileges. They would study Psychology and Methods of Teaching, and they would begin to teach in the Model School and lead the gymnasium classes, and soon they would be gone. Even if Sarah were allowed to come back to redeem herself, they would be too far ahead to think of her. She would have to make friends anew, and —

The list of Juniors was finished and the speaker folded his paper.

"The Middlers have all passed," he said, smiling, and a wild cheer responded. The excitement was no longer to be kept under control.

"As for the Seniors —" The Chairman paused. The cheer died down into silence.

It was time once more to drop the proverbial pin.

"They have all passed too."

Then Bedlam suddenly broke loose. Boys and girls were on their feet, there was cheer after cheer, and Dr. Ellis sat smiling and making no effort to subdue them. Perhaps it would have been a relief to him to join. His pupils had never done so well.

After a long time the Chairman held up his hand.

"I have still more to say," he declared. "And after I am through with the announcements you will still have to listen to my story about the time when I was a little boy. But first I have a story to tell about a little girl.

"When we are boys and girls, we are taught to think that our teachers are infallible, that they can never make mistakes, and it is good for us to think so. It is equally good for us to find out later that teachers and grown-up people have made mistakes. It makes us feel easier about our own.

"There is a young lady in this school who has found this out. She came here to learn something about books, after a hard experience had taught her many more valuable lessons, and this is the way the teachers treated her. Instead of giving her as little to do as possible, and watching to see that she played, and taking her books away from her by force if necessary, they began to give her extra work to do. It was n't altogether their fault, because they were not accustomed to having to restrain pupils. Overstudy is a little like smallpox. Many doctors would n't recognize smallpox because they have never seen a case. It was the same way with these teachers who let this girl work too hard.

"That, one would think, was enough hardship for one year. But worse things were to happen to her.

"Yesterday — and this story is a terrible confession for a State Board official to make — yesterday the State Board gave her the wrong papers. The principal told us about

her, — I suppose he meant us to mark her as easily as we could. But the examiner who distributed the sub-Junior papers thought that the principal had said she was a sub-Junior, and the examiner who distributed the Junior papers thought she was a Junior, and so both gave her papers, and she — "

Gertrude Manley felt suddenly a head against her shoulder.

"Why, Sarah!" she whispered, and saw only a bit of scarlet cheek.

"And she," the Chairman went on, "being accustomed to having extra work, said nothing and sawed wood, with this result." He unfolded again the paper in his hand.

"She passed the Arithmetic, Physiology, and Spelling which she was expected to pass, with good marks. She did not take the sub-Junior Political Geography, but she passed the Junior Physical Geography and the Junior Latin and the Junior History with good marks. In these branches I believe she did the extra work during the winter. In the

Junior Grammar, which includes the sub-Junior Grammar, she just made passing mark. We tried to persuade ourselves that she had n't really passed, but she was too much for us. Even when a fern and some steps were thrust before her to be drawn, she did not falter but drew them. The Civil Government paper she did not attempt, which surprised us greatly. It was very inconsiderate of the teacher of Civil Government not to give her extra lessons too. I think Dr. Ellis should speak to him about it. And now, what shall we do with this girl?"

Not one of the gasping students offered a suggestion.

"Well, there are several possibilities," went on the Chairman. "We can say that inasmuch as she has n't passed her sub-Junior Geography, she has n't passed at all and will have to take the year over. But that does n't seem fair. Or we can say that she is a Junior in spite of the Geography. The only objection to that is that she will grow very lazy

next year with nothing new to study but Civil Government. Not all of us approve of that. Then there is one other plan. We can make her a Middler, with the provision that she makes up the Civil Government some time within the next two years. It is unprecedented, but it can be done. What does the school think of this plan?"

The pupils looked about in complete mystification. Was it all true, or was it only a story? Then a few of them began to guess whom the Chairman meant. One of them was Edward Ellis.

"I think she should be made a Middler," he said.

"Very well, so be it." The Chairman opened the box at his side. "I wish that State Boards did not change, so that we might all come back here next year and make it easy for this young lady; but since we can't, we wish to apologize to her, and to give her a little present to remember us by." He lifted a great handful of roses from the

HE KEPT HER BESIDE HIM

box. "And now, good-by, and good luck." And he stood still with the bouquet in his hands, forgetting apparently the promised story of his boyhood.

"Well," he said, with a smile, his voice more Pennsylvania-German than ever, "where is this Sarah Wenner, about whom I have been talking?"

Ethel Davis's voice shook.

"Go and get your flowers, youngster."

"I can't."

"You must. Run along."

She rose to let Sarah pass, and then some one near by stood up to see, and in a moment the school was on its feet and some one was singing. It was the old tune which for many years had closed the session of the State Board, the long-metre doxology. They finished the first line as the Chairman put the flowers into Sarah's arms. Then, seeing what a little girl she was, he laid his hand on her shoulder and kept her beside him, while he startled her with his great bass.

And Sarah gave up trying to puzzle out how what the Chairman said could be true. She saw Ethel smiling at her and Gertrude waving her hand, and Professor Minturn and Miss Ellingwood and Mr. Sattarlee laughing together at the back of the room, and she grew a little less frightened and clasped her flowers a little more tight in her arms. The troubles of the past year seemed to dwindle, the joys to grow, until it was all joy and happiness, and she lifted up her voice and sang out with all her heart.

STACK ROOM
Date Due

WITHDRAWN
BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE
SHUTE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

When Sarah went to school.

ITHDRAW
BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE
SHUTE MEMORIAL LIBRAR